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THE NEW REPUBLIC

March 25, 1978

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The Other Side of the Tracks In Jimmy Carter's Georgia

A report by Nick Kotz

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ARSON IS NOW A LESS THAN PERFECT CRIME.

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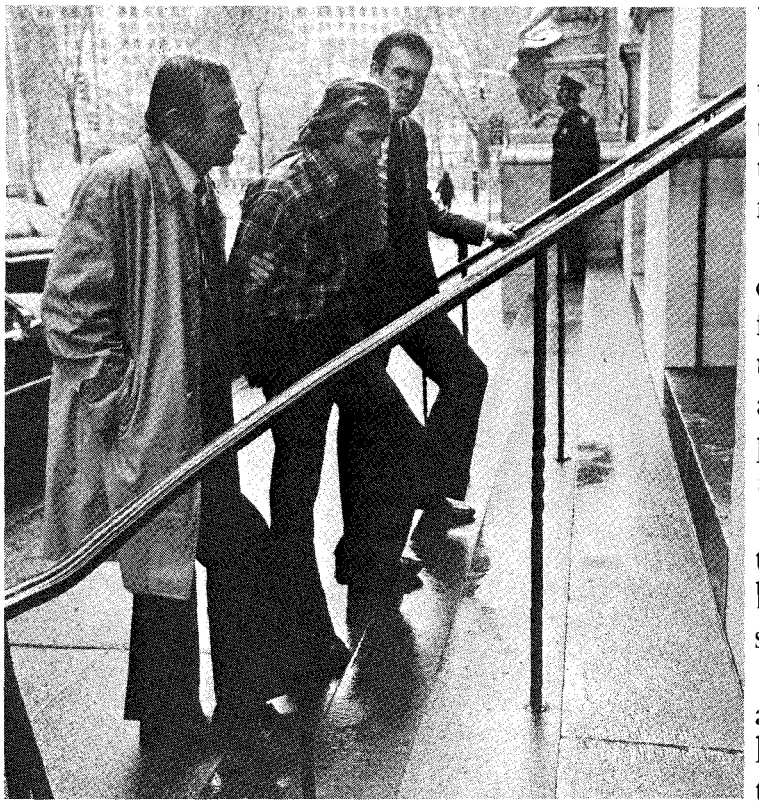

But in recent months, two cities, Houston and Seattle, have pointed out the way to bring down the alarming rate of arson.

Both have placed emphasis on a long-neglected facet of fire fighting: fire investigating. Firemen have become adept at policemen's work; policemen have become adept at firemen's work.

In Seattle, particularly, the insurance industry has become involved in helping to spot instances of arson.

The result: while all across the country arson is looked at as a growth stock in the criminal's stock-in-trade, Seattle and Houston have actually experienced significant reductions in the number of cases of arson and substantial increases in the number of arrests. Proof, maybe, that those two statistics go hand in hand.

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TRB

from Washington
March 25, 1978

Cast of Thousands

I don't know whether to start this essay with an American battleship dashing round the Horn in wartime, a biologist slicing the salivary gland of a female mosquito, a volcanic eruption killing 30,000 people, a young man coming down the presidential receiving line with a handkerchief round his hand and a gun in it or the vote of the United States Senate last week on the Panama Canal.

They form a pattern though separated by time. They are part of the story of the Canal. History jogs on, never stops—always different, always the same. The incidents happened in this century but, if I wanted, I could add an earlier century, with the Founding Fathers requiring Senate consent to treaties by a two-thirds vote. Founding Fathers Jay and Hamilton hailed the requirement in the Federalist Papers (where they wrote under a pseudonym, like TRB). Hamilton called the provision, which excluded the dangerously democratic House of Representatives, "one of the best digested and most unexceptionable parts of the plan." Actually, it is one of the most dangerous; the one-third-plus-one veto power kept us out of the League of Nations during repeated votes in 1919-1920, although at all times a big Senate majority favored a League. It has been the great obstacle in the current Senate debate on Panama. Founding Father Jay said it was wise to keep such things out of the hands of the House, tainted with "the supineness, the ignorance . . . of the multitude." Hamilton heartily agreed. Only the elite Senate, picked by state legislatures, they felt, could maintain the necessary diplomatic secrecy and celerity. And today it means that 34 out of 535 members in Congress can veto the President. The provision brought juicy favors from the White House last week to last-minute Senate hold-outs.

One episode in the Panama story is the all-but-forgotten dash of the battleship *Oregon* in the Spanish War, from San Francisco round South America to join the Atlantic fleet. Would she be intercepted? The Spanish squadron had mysteriously disappeared after the *Maine* blew up in Havana harbor. For two months the question "Any news?" meant any news of the *Oregon*, which took 67 agonizing days to make the 12,000-mile trip. With a canal it would have been 4000 miles; with it we would have had a two ocean navy. It became an imperative for the nation to dig the canal, and for nobody more so than ex-Rough Rider, ex-New York governor Teddy Roosevelt. The GOP conservatives regarded Teddy as dangerous, so they made him vice president in 1900 to get rid of him.

McKinley is President now and, on the second day of his visit to the great Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, September 6, 1901, he shakes hands with a queue in the Temple of Music on the fairgrounds. One man approaches with his hand in a handkerchief and the President courteously extends his left hand to greet him. There are two shots, and the President dies a week later. "Czolgosz" becomes the greatest bane to typesetters until Brzezinski. (Within seven years anarchists killed the President of France, Empress of Austria, King of Italy, Prime Minister of Spain and President of the United States.) On the McKinley funeral train Mark Hanna snarls, "And now look, that damn cowboy is President!"

Englishman John Morley said that Theodore Roosevelt and Niagara Falls were the two outstanding natural phenomena of the United States. Teddy had a high strident voice that rose to a raucous falsetto. His teeth and eyeglasses glittered. He pillow-fought with his children in the White House and played the Obstacle Game with them outside, which involved proceeding in an undeviating straight line through or over whatever came in his path. (His wife saw him climbing an out-house once.) He was a burly Peter Pan. He also was the best phrase-maker in US history: big stick, fit as a bull moose, Square Deal, malefactors of great wealth, an out-patient of bedlam. And his angry comment on Justice Holmes, who disappointed him in a decision: "I could carve a stiffer backbone out of a banana." For Panama he left a memorable phrase, too, quoted all through the current Senate debate—"I took it."

Next episode in the scenario is a side show: some people wanted the canal built in Nicaragua and the debate grew lively, the issue turning on whether Nicaragua was safe . . . there were volcanoes there. Advocates of Panama presented a postage stamp issued by Nicaragua, which showed a smoking volcano. And then Nature took a hand; while Congress debated Mount Pele erupted and blew off its top, killing 30,000. That ended the argument.

So now at last the United States had the right to build the canal in Panama, but it was in one of the world's worst pest holes. Americans knew what that meant. We had lost 10 times as many soldiers from yellow fever and malaria in Cuba than from enemy bullets—at one time half the Army was incapacitated. What happened next is told by David McCullough in his splendid book *The Path Between the Seas* (Simon & Schuster). In 1898 an English physician, Ronald Ross, dissected an *Anopheles* mosquito's salivary gland and showed that an insect sick with malaria transmits it to everything it bites; it is not the source of malaria but the victim of it. American biologist Walter Reed did the same thing with the *Aedes Aegypti*, carrier of yellow jack. The Isthmus was a mosquito paradise, there were wrigglers in every open cistern, in the very water barrels for drinking water. There were no screens. Further research showed that only the female mosquito feeds on blood, and prefers human. The male gets by with other fluids.

Rear Admiral John G. Walker, pig-headed Chief of the Isthmian Canal Commission, could not be convinced. A Nobel Prize had been awarded for the mosquito discovery; mosquito extirpation in Havana was proving successful, but the Commission couldn't believe it. Col. Gorgas, the Army doctor, pleaded; "Balderdash!" said practical John G. Walker. Chasing mosquitoes and fighting funny little wrigglers with taxpayers' money seemed preposterous to him. "Get the mosquito idea out of your head," Walker kindly advised Gorgas. Then men began to die. Tens of thousands of lives were at stake.

Roosevelt fired the whole Commission. And just in time. Modern sanitation advanced with the steam shovel. The canal opened in 1914—one of the proudest accomplishments of American civilization. And sitting there in the Senate gallery last week I thought I saw a little group dressed in tropical white nearby listening to the debate—Gorgas and Goethals and the others and, among them, that sturdy figure with glittering glasses and flashing teeth . . . I thought Teddy winked at me.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Cover: Families live in these shacks, without running water or even outhouses, in Americus, Georgia, where the White House press corps stays when the President is 10 miles away in Plains. Photo by Koinonia Partners. Article on page 16.

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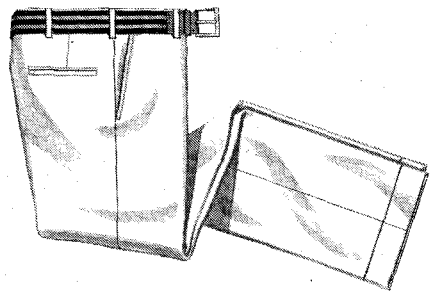

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

March 25, 1978

Kissing Off the Public Schools

American public schools are in a bad way. The worst figures are well known: From 1963 to 1977, average scores on the verbal portion of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (the College Boards) dropped 49 points and those on the mathematical part dropped 32 points. The government-funded National Assessment of Educational Progress found in 1975 that more than 12 percent of the nation's 17-year-old high school students were functionally illiterate. Only 53 percent of these 17-year-olds were aware that each state has two senators and that members of Congress are not appointed by the President. Almost all the major testing services—ACT, Minnesota, Iowa, Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills—report a decline in student scores in reading, math, social science, natural science and writing.

The education establishment—notably the National Education Association—has asserted that the problem lies with testing and not with teaching. But the public is not accepting the argument, nor should it. The test results merely confirm what citizens see with their own eyes. Virtually anyone who can afford to has abandoned the nation's big city school systems for the suburbs or for private schools. Even in the suburbs, parents increasingly are opting for private schools to give their children "a good education."

The causes of the plight of the public schools and what to do about them have been subjects of confusion and intense ideological controversy. A panel set up in 1975 to study the decline in SAT scores reported two years later that any or all of the following factors might have been at fault: relaxed teaching and learning standards, television, changes in the American family and "unprecedented turbulence in the nation's affairs" during the 1960s and 1970s. The committee's findings are so unfocused that they are worthless as guides for public policy. Meanwhile, liberals and conservatives have been fighting for more than a decade over the effects of segregation versus desegregation of students and faculties, "permissiveness" versus rigidity in classrooms, electives versus "basics" in curricula.

Of all the controversies, the most tragic and far-reaching has been that over race. The United States Constitution, morality and good educational policy all dictated that the schools should be integrated. Research studies continue to show that heterogeneous classes do better than ones in which all students come from similar social, economic and racial backgrounds. A 1975 report commissioned by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, for example, showed that high-achieving students tended to pull up the performance of low achievers without any detriment to themselves. The 1966 Coleman Report and a 1972 New York State report that surveyed 97 educational studies conducted throughout the nation between 1951 and 1970 both came to the same conclusion. The three reports also agreed that racial integration has a positive effect on the academic performance of both blacks and whites, provided that at least half the class is white.

In spite of all these findings, so many whites have fled the urban public school systems that only five of the nation's 20 biggest school systems have white majorities, and only nine of the 30 biggest systems. Irrational white fear of integration has left the urban public schools populated by the most disadvantaged youngsters in society. The National Assessment of Educational Progress found that 21 percent of the 17-year-olds from "disadvantaged urban areas" were functionally illiterate, and nearly 42 percent of 17-year-old blacks. It was irrational white fear—and the not-so-irrational lack of confidence that the schools were strong and resourceful enough to perform the heavy

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social and educational tasks that society was placing on them—that created this situation.

Now that big city public school systems have become so decisively resegregated, we fear that the white majority's new tendency will be to abandon them utterly—to declare them forever the preserve of the poor and functionally illiterate. Just this result would be encouraged by legislation now before Congress to provide income tax credits for parents who send their children to private schools. Sponsored by Senators Robert Packwood, Republican of Oregon, and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Democrat of New York, the measure has 49 co-sponsors and was approved, 14-1, by the Senate Finance Committee. The finance committee merged it with the proposal of Senator William Roth, Republican of Delaware, to provide tax credits to parents with children in college. We oppose that part of the bill, too, but for other reasons.

The stated purposes of the Packwood-Moynihan measure are to provide needed relief to the tax-harassed middle class and to undo more than a century of injustice suffered by American Catholics. Senator Moynihan argues that the Constitution's "establishment of religion" prohibition never was meant to prohibit public aid to parochial schools, as the Supreme Court has interpreted it. He often compares the court's anti-parochial aid decisions to *Plessy* vs. *Ferguson*, the "separate but equal" ruling overturned in 1954. Moynihan charges that denial of aid to parochial schools historically grows out of "nativism" and anti-Catholic prejudice. He also reminds colleagues frequently that both the Republican and Democratic party platforms in 1976 called for efforts to pass parochial aid legislation that the courts can accept.

Whatever Moynihan's and Packwood's motives, the effect of their bill will be to encourage flight from the public schools. Parents could credit against their taxes half their children's private school tuition up to a maximum of $500 per student per year. This would amount to a $500 bonus for abandoning the public schools, whether in the big cities or the suburbs. Its most telling impact surely would be in the cities, where the federal government would encourage upwardly-mobile parents, regardless of race, to send their children to parochial or other private schools. Who would remain in the public schools? Only the children of the least educated, least ambitious and least aware. Under those circumstances, what political constituency will there be for urban public education?

The tuition tax credit to offset college costs is designed simply to help the middle class, but its proponents have not made a case that it is necessary. It is true that the average annual cost of attending public universities has increased more than 40 percent in the last five years, and that for private universities 35 percent. But median family income has risen at an even faster rate. Tax credits to parents probably will only encourage colleges to hike their tuitions faster. If Congress deems it necessary to aid the middle class, a better way to do it is to pass a tax deferral measure such as that sponsored by Representative Abner Mikva of Illinois, which at least requires parents to repay with interest the amounts they have saved after their children have graduated. The Carter administration, meanwhile, has introduced legislation providing increased grants and loan opportunities for disadvantaged and lower-middle-class students. This is a more direct and less regressive way than the Roth bill to help those who need help.

Sadly, the Packwood-Moynihan tuition credit plan for elementary and secondary education is achieving popularity just at a time when serious new public and political attention is being focused on what ails public schools. This is occurring in the form of widespread clamor for a return to "basics" in school curricula and for competency testing to determine whether educational standards are being met. President Carter's education message called for increased aid to schools in disadvantaged areas, and especially for intensified instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic. The administration wisely has declared its opposition to a national competency test, which would lead to a national school curriculum. But it is helping states and local governments use testing to judge pupil and school performance. All but four of the states are studying or implementing competency testing programs, and some are imbroiled in controversies over whether to require students to pass standard exams before permitting them to graduate.

Early this month, the government's National Institute of Education sponsored a conference on testing, but it really was a conference about the quality of education in America. One feature of the meeting was a new report on the decline in student test scores—this one more focused and useful than the 1977 study and suggesting that a better consensus may be forming among educators about the ills of education. The new report put responsibility for improving education squarely on local school districts and schools, and advised that more time should be spent on courses that are more rigorous in content. It approved the use of standardized tests, but disapproved national testing and test-passing requirements for high school diplomas. The latter tests would become the sole objects of schoolwork, the panel said, and students who failed would be stamped as society's failures.

The proceedings in Washington suggest that there may be hope yet for American public education, even in the big cities. There are some new ideas around and some new determination to concentrate on quality and performance by both teachers and students. It is far too early to say that the public schools are on the verge of a Renaissance, but it is also far too early to condemn them—as Senators Packwood and Moynihan would—to a sustained Dark Ages.

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Correspondence

Nuclear power

To the editors:

Having been employed in the nuclear industry since 1953, I was quite disturbed by the inaccuracies and misleading statements contained in the article "Nuclear Goes Broke" by William Metz (*TNR*, Feb. 25).

As an example, the article states that nuclear plants were supposed to cost only $100 to $200 per kilowatt but that they now cost 10 times the original estimates made 15 years ago. The facts are that nuclear plants *now* cost about $600/kw in today's dollars, according to several recently-completed studies done by well-known engineering firms in the industry. This is about three times the costs estimated in 1963 rather than 10 times as reported in the article. The author has apparently chosen to compare the estimated cost of plants *now being proposed* (for late 1980s operation) with the cost of plants completed in the early 1960s, a time span of almost 30 years. One arrives at the same conclusion when comparing the price of a 1978 model automobile to the cost of a 1949 model. Subsequently, the author quotes a "thorough analysis" by RAND which shows that the cost of a nuclear plant in constant dollars rose by $188/kw each year during the 1970s. My arithmetic shows that if the cost of the plant was $200/kw in 1970, then according to RAND the cost last year was over $1500/kw in 1970 dollars! A study done for ERDA (now DOE) by a leading architectural-engineering firm in the industry shows an increase of $26/kw per year in constant dollars. The cost of a coal-fired power plant is increasing just as fast as new environmental regulations are being imposed on such plants. The author correctly reports that licensing a large reactor is a nightmare and that this situation contributes to the cost but fails to point out that the inefficient, lethargic, unstable and costly licensing process itself is the nightmare. The author reports that only nine reactors were ordered in the last three years (the actual number was 10) but fails to point out that these orders were about 40 per cent of the generating capacity ordered in the last three years.

The author overlooked: (1) the *perfect* safety record of the 67 nuclear plants now operating in the US; (2) the fact that these plants generated enough electricity to save over five billion dollars in imported oil costs in 1977; and, (3) the fact that the nuclear plants in the East and Midwest spelled the difference between adequate power and crippling blackouts as a large percentage of the coal-fired generating plants in those areas were immobilized by cold weather last winter and the prolonged coal strike this winter.

A.P. Zechella
President
Offshore Power Systems
Jacksonville, Florida

A press secretary's lot

To the editors:

I disagree with Henry Fairlie's conclusion that all recent presidential press secretaries have been interested only in "entertainment" and not in substance ("The Rise of the Press Secretary," *TNR*, Mar. 18). During my time at the White House my greatest frustration was seeing masses of substantive information ignored by the reporters in favor of gossip, trivia, suspected scandal and other entertainment. I believe other presidential press secretaries, including Jody Powell, shared this frustration.

I do agree with Fairlie that the press secretary has assumed a much too prominent role in the flow of information from the government to the press to the public. The answer is for White House reporters to get out of the White House more, to seek their information in the departments and agencies where the real experts are, and to stop expecting the press secretary to know everything about everything at his daily briefing.

I am grateful that Fairlie has suspended making a final judgment on me and the other most recent press secretaries. At least we were not included in his Seven Deadly Sins!

By the way, who the hell was George Akerson?

Ron Nessen
Bethesda, Maryland

In reply:

George Akerson was Herbert Hoover's first press secretary.

The editors

Bouquet for Bode

To the editors:

I wish to express my congratulations and appreciation to Ken Bode and *The New Republic* for his perceptive article on Bella Abzug ("Requiem for a Heavyweight," *TNR*, Mar. 4) and the near-total exclusion of women from the governing process in the United States.

It was particularly warming to have his understanding, as John Stuart Mill expressed it in 1869: "Nor is the injustice confined to them: it is shared by those who are in a position to benefit by their services."

When Ken Bode says "It defies reason to believe that imbalances of this magnitude are not reflected in the outcome of the legislative process" he tolls the bell for all of us.

Martha Ragland
Nashville, Tennessee

Ethnocentric bile

To the editors:

Doesn't Eugene McCarthy have anything more to offer us, in his self-inflicted retirement, than ethnocentric bile regarding Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski? ("Thinking Zbig," *TNR*, Mar. 11). Is it necessary to introduce a critique of Brzezinski's policies with an attack on his (and Kissinger's) *place of birth*?

I did not share Henry Kissinger's view on Vietnam, nor do I share Brzezinski's view on Israel or on the strike at Columbia (my best friend was on the other side of *those* barricades), but one need not admire either of these gentlemen to defend them from racist attacks. The Senator's apparent message—that immigrants should not be allowed to be policy makers—is an appalling one and is unworthy of someone so many of us once admired.

David S. North
Washington, DC

To the editors:

Eugene McCarthy asserts that Zbigniew Brzezinski "has not written a book comparable to Walt Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth*, indicating his general policies . . ." Quite to the contrary, there is such a book: *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic*

(continued on page 30)

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Life Support for the PLO

There can be no joy from the Palestinian death tolls in Lebanon. But the hypocritical counsel of forebearance, preached at Israel by governments themselves habitues of violence, is contemptible. Thirty-two more Israeli innocents were cut down by PLO terrorists. No country could allow such carnage to go unpunished. Israel, especially, is constrained to demonstrate that Jewish blood will not again flow cheap. The retaliatory offensive launched against military targets in southern Lebanon is particularly justified because the Sabbath massacre on the Haifa-Tel Aviv highway was only one incident in a systematic and explicit campaign of terror from that area against the Jewish state and its citizens.

There's also something contemptible about the State Department's reluctance even to identify the Palestinian Liberation Organization as the criminals in this deed, long after the PLO's officials had smugly claimed the crime as their own. The exquisite sensitivity of the great powers toward the feelings of the PLO has helped to keep that organization just live enough for murder, live enough to hold compromise and peace negotiations hostage to assassination fears, live enough to have dismembered Lebanon. Those who caucused in the diplomatic corridors and decided to allow the PLO guerrillas their bases amidst noncombatant Lebanese must bear some responsibility for the casualties of the ensuing battles.

But of course they won't. Even before we knew how many Israelis had died, those *feuilletonistes* who had been peddling a moderate PLO were back at their old stumps, willing to defer the aspirations of decent peoples to the armed will of the crazed.

Zbigniew Brzezinski and President Carter might puzzle whether their hollow rhetoric may have breathed reviving breath into a PLO already left for finished on the bloody battlefields of Arab fratricide. Of course it will be harder for Brzezinski to puzzle. Much criticized and also very thin-skinned, he fights back by orchestrating a campaign against charges that he is anti-Semitic—charges, however, which no one has made. He is not anti-Semitic: of that long-time friends and long-time intellectual adversaries are eager to testify. Let's put an end to that discussion. But his is a brittle rationalist intelligence, given to logical syllogisms unhappily not germane to the passions and complexities of Middle East politics. Brzezinski has been consistently wrong, too dense to understand the requirements for security and peace of Israelis and moderate Arabs alike, out of sync with the views of the American people and our representative institutions. Unfortunately, he seems unable to contemplate, despite the devastating evidence before his eyes, that he may have been wrong conceptually. So he returns and wants everyone else to return to yet another version of his initial diplomatic non-starter: the comprehensive settlement. It was, after all, on that dais that he would have enthroned the Soviet Union as both arbiter and guarantor of peace. And it was toward that same dazzling goal that he would still force Israel to negotiate with President Sadat of Egypt, even though this would require Sadat to negotiate, as George Will put it, about territory that "doesn't belong to him on the basis of promises he can't keep."

Surely the US should stop tempting the PLO to dreams of power. Maybe even Marshal Tito and Dr. Kreisky could for once shut their mischievous mouths. With all that has happened in these last tragic days, Egypt and Israel still are determined to pursue peace, and there is nothing intractable about the differences that still separate them. A path now needs to be cleared for Jordan to enter its own talks with Israel. But Jordan must understand from the first that if it insists on reestablishing the perilous status quo ante of 1967—a status quo itself unrecognized and illegal—it aims at diplomatic failure. And the Begin government must recognize publicly once and for all what, given its roots in romatic nationalism, it is reluctant to recognize: that neither the Jews nor the Arabs of historic Palestine are going to have their ancient maps of the Holy Land restored.

Indochinese Refugees

Secretary of State Cyrus Vance has said in private, and refused to deny in public, that he favors opening this country to all refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia who cannot find a home elsewhere. In the world of diplomacy, compassion must be revealed by stealth. In this case, however, Secretary Vance does not fear the reactions of other countries. All the other nations affected—those the refugees have fled as well as those they have tried to enter—will be deeply relieved if the United States ends the international embarrassment symbolized by the "boat people," who are refused entry at port after port and whose distress signals are ignored by ships at sea.

Vance treads cautiously because he fears the reactions of Attorney General Griffin Bell and Representative Joshua Eilberg. Vance wants Bell to use the attorney general's emergency "parole" authority to bypass the usual immigration restrictions and admit the refugees. Bell is said to believe that the parole authority should only be used in individual hardship cases, and not for the admission of large groups. This belief apparently derives in part from a desire to please Representative Eilberg, who is chairman of the House Judiciary subcommittee on immigration, and who devotes his humanitarian energies primarily to the financial needs of hospitals in metropolitan Philadelphia.

When will Griffin Bell learn that it doesn't pay to do

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His destiny was to die in poverty and disappointment.

Yet his genius gave the world some of the most beautiful music ever heard.

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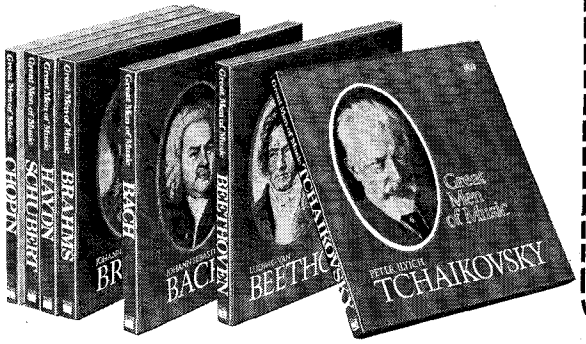

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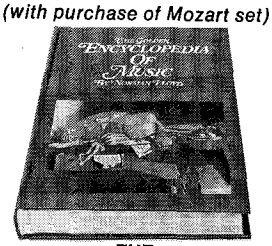

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favors for Joshua Eilberg? Leo Cherne, chairman of the International Rescue Committee and recipient of Vance's "private" views (which Cherne immediately passed on to *The New York Times*), says that 170,000 Hungarian refugees after 1956, 500,000 Cubans fleeing Castro and 175,000 Indochinese since 1975 have been admitted to this country under the attorney general's parole authority.

Possibly these were abuses of the parole authority as well, and possibly it is time for Congress to rethink and clarify our general policy on admitting political refugees (as Eilberg has been doing). But meanwhile, this is not an opportune moment to reassert the pristine purity of the parole authority. These Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees have the strongest possible claim on our compassion, since we are largely responsible for their plight.

White House Watch

In Jody's Shop (II)

A couple of experienced White House reporters disagreed with the view expressed here last week that Jody Powell is one of the best press secretaries to have come down the pike in a long while and that in some ways he is *the* best. Powell is a good old boy and a wonderful fellow and all that, the reporters said, but he's a terrible press secretary and getting worse. They maintained that their opinion of Powell is closer to the consensus of White House correspondents than mine is. In this they may be correct. Their opinion and my opinion are matters of judgment and a restatement of my criteria for judging White House press secretaries may be in order.

The first requirement is that a President's press secretary accurately reflect the President and, to the extent that one person can, the atmosphere of the inner circle around the President. The second requirement is that a press secretary in his dealings with reporters, publicly at his news briefings and privately in personal discussion, always distinguish clearly between himself and his President—between, that is, what the press secretary thinks his President should be saying and intending and what the President actually is saying and intending. Finally, a press secretary always should take care that what he says is consistent with the truth. Only permanent adolescents, idiots and ignoramuses expect a press secretary—or any other government spokesman—to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth all the time.

Powell meets the first two of these criteria admirably. When he is peeved on points of substance, aside from trivial and solely personal irritants that the President can't know about, reporters may safely assume that the President is peeved. Which is to say, accepting Powell as an accurate reflector, that Jimmy Carter is peeved and upset a good deal of the time. This is a tricky basis for judgment, granted: Richard Nixon's press secretary, Ronald Ziegler, reflected his President's moods in good times and bad with great fidelity and I valued him for that quality as I value Powell now. The conventional press-room wisdom is that Ziegler personified the worst in presidential press secretaries and, by association and affinity, in presidential character. When critical reporters at the Carter White House want to be particularly mean to Powell they imply that he's becoming another Ziegler.

Because he is as intimately acquainted as anyone in a staff role can be with the details and nuances of the President's wishes and intentions, Powell seldom has to distinguish between himself and Carter. When he speaks for himself rather than for the President, however, Powell says so with meticulous precision. As for consistency with the truth, without total and impossible addiction to the same, I know of only one instance in which Powell has strained the loose standard suggested here. He said again and again that the famous 33 pages of statements compiled in refutation of a report that the President's chief assistant, Hamilton Jordon, had spat liquor down a female barfly's blouse were provided to reporters only upon request and therefore were not "issued by the White House." At Powell's instruction, Deputy Press Secretary Rex Granum offered and gave Helen Thomas of UPI the main item in the file, a bartender's 24-page account supporting the White House denial, 36 hours before anybody else heard about and requested the stuff. Her story from the bartender's account moved over the wires late on a Saturday night and got very little attention.

Powell has been saying to some reporters that he thinks the atmosphere at White House press briefings has been turning uglier and uglier in recent months. He's right. It's partly the blood thirst that has prevailed in the White House and other press rooms since Watergate. It's partly the frustration of reporters who work mainly or solely in the press rooms and try and try, futilely most of the time, to extract something printable or useable on the air from normally sterile briefings. It's partly a kind of lunge for the presidential jugular in a period when Jimmy Carter has seemed to be unsuccessful, uncertain, burdened with problems beyond his and perhaps anybody's capacity to deal with them, and therefore vulnerable. At the risk of appearing to generate a degree of sympathy for the President's usual spokesmen, Powell and Granum, that they don't deserve, two among many extreme examples of press-room behavior are offered.

One of the White House press corps' aggressive moralitarians suckered Rex Granum into saying the other day that the President "would not be proud" of

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striking coal miners who defied the Taft-Hartley injunction ordering them back to work. That being so, the reporter barked, why had the President said he was "proud of Bert Lance" after the Comptroller of the Currency cited past violations of federal banking regulations by Lance? The reporter misstated the Comptroller's report in question as badly as the President misread it last fall when he thought it exonerated his friend and first budget director. Granum answered that he found it hard "to see the correlation" between the coal strike and the Lance affair and asserted with mocking vigor that the President is against breaking the law and for "motherhood and apple pie." Let it be said for most of the reporters present that they were laughing at the instigator of this exchange before it ended.

At the start of the rumpus over the Jordan spitting report, a press corps veteran asked Powell whether he thought it proper for people who frequent bars to have access to classified intelligence information as Hamilton Jordan does. Powell answered in part: "I think that if we followed the implication of your question and barred all those who ever go into a bar from having access to classified material . . . very few people would ever see classified material." Powell, who enjoys taking jabs at the journalists in his captive audience, added the following irrelevance: "I think it is as proper as having people who are charged with informing the American public on government going into bars and drinking hard liquor."

The sad thing is that some reporters, including some of the ablest assigned to the White House, take this sort of crack as a serious indication of a dislike of the press that disqualifies Powell. Carter and Powell showed during the 1975-76 primary and election campaigns that they have bouts of dislike and contempt for journalists. So what? The oldest cliché in the business is that the relationship between press and Presidents is by its nature an adversary relationship and that's true, thank God. Presidents and their spokesmen don't have to like the media and journalists. The more dislike there is, the better, so long as it does not impede the flow of information. At the Carter-Powell White House, the dislike is usually repressed and does not impede such flow as there is. When it is expressed at all it generally takes the form of good-ol'-boy humor, Georgia and Powell style.

"I have never been a reporter," Powell said in the course of suggesting that the original Jordan bar story should have been checked more thoroughly than it was. "I just pick these things up sort of by watching you people work." After remarking that some people on the White House staff were going to be moved from their present jobs to other jobs solely "because of a desire to bring the particular talents and strengths that they have to bear in another area," he listened for a moment to derisive laughter and said: "That is frankly not the facetious comment you cynical jerks think it is." When reminded that a report he was trying to minimize had originated in "a major column in *The New York Times*," he replied: "I realize the earth-shattering import of a major column in *The New York Times*. However, whether that indeed establishes what the facts are in the real world is at least slightly still open to question."

At briefings and in conversation, Powell acknowledged that he'd overdone his reaction to the Jordan spitting allegation with those 33 pages and several angry and prolonged outbursts in telephone calls to reporters. "I think it probably could have been handled a little more deftly," he said. "On the other hand I'm inclined to think that if we had not reacted strongly there would not have been very much of the sort of thoughtful reaction that has taken place since then." Here he referred to commentaries deploring the gossip journalism that produced the Jordan bar story. He made a vaild point when he said at a White House briefing: "You are dealing with human beings. They have got families and friends. It is not a name and a title sitting over there, Hamilton Jordan, that has no person attached to it. That is a real person, believe it or not. It just struck me that you ought to think about that every now and then."

An old and subtle conflict between a President's presumed right to national television and radio network time and the networks' presumed right to decide whether to grant time to Presidents is surfacing and bothering Powell. There never has been a question about granting time in national emergencies and never any real question about granting it on occasions of obvious and undisputed national interest. Jody Powell's predecessors, press secretaries Ron Ziegler for Nixon and Ron Nessen for Ford, felt or suspected during their first months at the White House that the networks were applying more rigid standards to their Presidents than had been applied to previous Presidents. Powell is beginning to suspect that he should be feeling that way. Ziegler and Nessen concluded while in office that they were mistaken and hold now that they were treated fairly when they either requested time or, without explicitly asking for time, made presidential events "available" to the networks. Ziegler's overall recollection of that part of his experience is in stark contrast with the hatred for network managements and correspondents that Nixon and his propagandists, Ziegler among them, expressed in that administration's

Coming:

Coal After the Strike

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twilight period. "At the management and bureau chief level, the only level I dealt with in requests for time, there was never animosity, even toward the end," Ziegler says.

Nessen and his President had a brush with the networks that still affects network attitudes and network relationships with the White House. Ford insisted that the CBS, ABC and NBC television networks carry live a counter-inflation speech that he made to the Future Farmers of America in Kansas City. When they discovered in the words of a network veteran of that fight that the speech was going to consist of "little homilies like clean your plate when you eat and shop carefully at the supermarket," they notified Nessen that they were not going to carry it. Ford ordered Nessen to lodge a formal request for coverage by all three networks. Nessen did, and the networks obeyed what they rightly understood to be presidential orders. CBS apologized for broadcasting such pap and its news division president, Arthur Taylor, wrote Ford that the networks thereafter would scrutinize presidential requests more stringently than they had in the past.

Powell and Carter's radio-TV adviser, Barry Jagoda, formally requested live coverage of Carter's speech in behalf of the Panama Canal treaties the night of February 1. ABC and NBC television carried it live. CBS broadcast a videotape of it later that night. CBS's refusal to carry the speech live jarred and angered the Carter people. Even Jagoda, a former network producer and writer who keeps telling his White House colleagues that the networks are only exercising their duty and right to apply their own news judgment to coverage or non-coverage of Carter events, was upset by the CBS attitude in this instance. Powell and Jagoda also did their utmost, short of formal request, to persuade all three networks to broadcast live a Carter speech on civil service reform and a Carter press conference at the National Press Club on March 2. Only CBS obliged and its news executives seriously considered joining ABC and NBC in their refusal to broadcast the press club appearance.

Powell is convinced that the CBS decision to delay its broadcast of the Panama Canal speech was intended to be a message to the administration from all three networks. He thinks they were saying that *their* judgment of news value or the lack of same and not the White House judgment would govern subsequent decisions to provide or not provide live coverage. That has always been the basic network position and the Carter people, Powell included, don't question the rightness of it. Jagoda possibly excluded, they just worry about it. Jagoda and concerned network executives tell Powell and other Carterites that there won't be a serious problem if they stop worrying and fretting.

John Osborne

District 29 is fed up.

White Rebellion

Queens, New York

The papers are calling it a middle class rebellion. The quarrel, which raged in obscurity for several years, burst out into the open in Queens this spring when members of a local school board voted not to accept federal money because they believed the conditions attached to it were demeaning.

New York School District 26—which encompasses a population that is mostly white, relatively successful and sure of its values—did not want to be treated like an idiot child. Although the board decided to reject the federal money, it now appears that the City of New York has used its legal authority to overrule the district. It will step in and play the child instead, hoping to obtain the grant in the district's behalf.

Mrs. Lee Goldman, a former president of the District 26 school board and one of the current members who voted to refuse the grant, said she didn't like it because it was "an insult to our community." The city had asked the board to apply for 50 jobs for its students under the Youth Employment Demonstration Program Act, an emergency plan to give jobs to city dwellers. It is part of President Carter's campaign to reduce teenage unemployment, and it was sped into existence by the looting that took place in New York last summer. Mrs. Goldman and others took offense because the city asked the district in a high-handed way to sign off on a program that seemed to "discriminate against middle class children." According to Goldman, much of the money was to be given to adult coordinators and consultants of various kinds. And the guidelines set down by the federal government were niggling and arbitrary. Half the jobs had to go to males and half to females. All participants were to be "economically disadvantaged," which means, in the mechanistic logic of the system, that they had to be eligible for a free lunch at school. To get a free lunch, you must belong to a family of four members with a total income of $7000 or less. At least 15 percent of the kids were required to have "limited English-speaking ability;" 40 percent were to be "potential dropouts"; 10 percent "youthful offenders"; 12 percent mentally, physically or otherwise handicapped; and five percent were to be mentally retarded.

The anger that came out in this vote was an expression of frustration with the educational bureaucracy that had accumulated since 1972. That year the school board voted for the first time to refuse to fill out an "ethnic survey form" provided by the city to determine how many orientals, blacks, hispanics, Indians and "others" work in the schools. It resolved not to cooperate in anything that might lead to the establishment of racial job quotas. The board did not

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object, however, to another routine survey taken every year since 1957, a survey that tabulates the *students* by race. Every year when it came time to turn in this data, District 26 and a dozen others in Queens and Brooklyn would surrender the numbers for pupils but not those for teachers and principals. And each year when this happened, the central board of education would send out agents to collect the missing ethnic information about the staff. The New York schools have been run by a purportedly decentralized system since 1970, but the power of local boards actually has been quite limited. Because the central office still controls the purse strings, it can intervene when it pleases to supersede or even suspend local boards. Ever since the ethnic question became a hot one, the central office has found it necessary to use this authority to collect staff data in a dozen districts. The local boards have resisted this arrangement, but never openly obstructed it—until this year.

The tension between the schools and the data gatherers worsened in 1976. That year the Office for Civil Rights of the federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare decided, for obscure reasons, to make an in-depth study of the New York system. The city's chief of statistics for the schools—Richard Vigilante—believed HEW was on a "fishing expedition," a random search for ethnic improprieties. The HEW clerks, who fanned out and collected racial statistics from every school, would not tell the pollees what the numbers would be used for. Vigilante estimates that it cost New York almost one million dollars to cooperate by supplying data, a cost that was not reimbursed by the feds. In the end, the teachers' fears were confirmed. HEW, using the statistics it had gathered, charged New York with discriminating against minorities, both as pupils and employees. The city fought the charge in court, but lost. In order to avoid being subjected to court-ordered staffing changes, as other cities have been, the board of education signed a memorandum of agreement with HEW last September.

According to the terms of this memo, the city has until 1979 to see to it that the "teacher corps" in each school district reflects the same racial composition (within five percent) as the teacher corps for the whole city. By 1980, each school—not merely each district—will have to meet the same standard. In addition, the city agreed to adopt an "affirmative action plan" to hire and promote women and minority teachers. Among the other promises the city made, the one that most upset teachers was the agreement to do away with rank. In the past, New York has required all teacher candidates to pass a written exam, and those who passed were ranked in order of their score. The city gave preference in hiring according to rank. HEW wanted to do away with exams altogether. The city compromised, agreeing to abolish rank in order to keep the test on a straight pass-fail basis.

One must know some of this history to understand District 26's recent defiance. The president of the district school board, William Caulfield, a former teacher himself, is leading the campaign against both the memorandum of understanding with HEW and the ethnic census. Caulfield and allies sued the city last fall, charging that the HEW memorandum of understanding violated the teachers' Constitutional right to be hired and promoted without regard to race. The US district court judge in New York who heard the case—Jack Weinstein—would not rule on Caulfield's Constitutional claim, but he did rule the memorandum out of order for procedural reasons. On March 10, four days after the judge gave his opinion, the city suspended Caulfield and the other members of the District 26 board for insubordination. They were tossed out specifically for refusing to submit the ethnic data on staff *and* students. This is the first time a board has been suspended since decentralization began.

Caulfield believes he is being punished for leading a rebellion and successfully suing the city. City officials do not deny that they hope to quell the rebellion by punishing District 26, but they also suggest Caulfield has some self-interested reasons for making an issue of the ethnic census. Until very recently, they point out, District 26 has not prevented the collection of ethnic data on students. But in order to give their case in court more credence, city officials say Caulfield and friends may have made it a point of principle to refuse to collect data on children—a policy that was formally established only last June. One city statistician also pointed out that the district is known as a good assignment for city teachers. It is a suburb within the city, with few apartment houses, some open fields and row upon row of single-family brick houses. Teachers with tenure are allowed to pick their own assignment, and for years they have been picking District 26. As a result, it houses the highest paid, best dug-in, most deeply established teacher corps in the system. Quite a lot of its students are teachers' children. As Mrs. Goldman said, they are the "brightest in the city," and have the best attendance record. For these reasons, the district is leading a fight that many teachers and principals support. A city statistician estimated that the school staff in the district is "in excess of 90 percent white," and therefore highly vulnerable to any race-oriented job allocation plan.

This is not to question the sincerity of the district's opposition to the ethnic census. Helene Zaro, vice president of the school board, views it as a revival of the Nuremberg Laws: "Read the story of the Holocaust," she says "and you'll see that the first thing they did was to go from house to house and collect numbers." The census is not as bad as that, but it is repugnant. Furthermore it is a clumsy instrument of justice, so clumsy that the figures in some cases are meaningless. Chief statistician Vigilante concedes that unless the census is taken by someone who knows the individuals,

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it is likely to be wrong. "I think it would be impossible to identify an American Indian," he said, "just by looking in the window." The New York ethnic census always has been done by observation. The teacher guesses the race of her pupils, and the principal guesses the race of the teachers. The entire system will come undone the day that people demand the right to establish their own ethnic tags. The tidy category called "other" will disintegrate into a dozen splinters.

The larger battle, of course, is being fought to determine how the New York schools will be integrated. The system today is 29 percent white. The city board of education has decided that districts which are already well integrated—meaning those with a modest white majority of around 60 percent—will not be meddled with. Those with higher white population are merged with black districts. And those that are more than 50 percent black are invited to send their black children by bus to other schools. But no whites are asked to travel into black neighborhoods.

Jimmy Meyerson, assistant general counsel for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in New York, called this a "Rhodesian situation." He said the city's attitude is "fundamentally racist" because it puts all the burden for integration on blacks. It is "old-time racism," he said, to believe that blacks benefit from being sent to school in predominantly white districts, but that whites will not benefit from being sent into black districts. He would like to have whites bused as well as blacks. To quote from an NAACP legal brief Meyerson wrote last week and handed to me: "The NAACP would define an integrated facility as one which could be majority minority while the City School District and the Commissioner would decline to do so. Such a policy is consciously discriminatory and reinforces false senses within both the black community and the white community (in the former a sense of rejection in the latter a sense of superiority)."

This text is a fair sample of the doublespeak in which the debate is carried on these days. It means simply that both blacks and whites benefit from integration, and therefore the city should drive home this ideological point by compelling whites to attend schools where they will be outnumbered—thus the term "majority minority." City officials argue that coercion of this sort would merely accelerate white flight into the suburbs or beyond. Meyerson asserts that the city in this particular instance is wrong.

District 26 is one of the few school districts in the New York system where whites still greatly outnumber blacks and hispanics. It is integrated, however, because many children are bused in from other districts, making up one-quarter to one-third of the student population. The unarticulated fear one finds in District 26 is a dread of a black or hispanic take-over of the school staff. One white parent specifically said she does not object to having black teachers sprinkled throughout the district, but she would insist on having a school principal whose attitudes affirm those of the community. She did not want the federal government's advice on this.

Eliot Marshall

The Democratic raid on the GOP treasury.

Partisan Bullying

After the last national election, the way it was told around Washington, the Repubican Party had to be monitored for vital signs. The party had lost the White House, had failed to recoup its 1974 congressional losses and was whittled down to a mere dozen state governors. Now some Democrats worry that the recovery is coming along too well.

There's been no significant change in the numbers that inspired the original dire prognosis. The GOP picked up a few House seats in special elections, and if normal midterm trends prevail they can hope for a few more in 1978. What inspires alarm is that the Republicans have completely outstripped the Democrats in raising money. Right now the Republicans have $18.5 million on hand and the Democrats have only $5.6 million. The elections are only a few months away and there are nearly twice as many incumbent Democrats as Republicans to claim a share. Money is still the mother's milk of politics, and GOP leaders at all levels concluded reasonably enough that if they were ever to restore vitality to a party drained of talent and battered by scandal, a necessary first condition was to restore the treasury.

There is no prospect whatever for the majority party to catch up financially before this year's elections. John White, the new Democratic National Committee Chairman, has said there will be no direct cash payments to congressional candidates this year. So a few Democratic leaders in the House—principally Majority Whip John Brademas of Indiana and House Administration Committee chairman Frank Thompson of New Jersey—decided on another course to neutralize the Republican money: just prevent them from spending it. On a straight party-line vote last week, Thompson's committee reported out an amendment to the campaign financing laws to reduce from $20,000 to $10,000 the total amount a national party committee, congressional campaign committee and state party could give to any congressional candidate. What those three organizations combined could spend on behalf of a candidate for advertisements and the like also would be reduced from $20,000 to $5000. The limit on

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contributions from political action committees (PACs) set up by corporations, unions, etc., would be cut from $5000 per candidate to $2500.

Republicans called the changes "sheer partisan bullying," intended to prevent them from gaining seats in the House and Senate. The changes were sprung on the Republicans without notice and passed on to the floor of the House without public hearings.

For this little abuse of power, the Democrats offer the following rationale: Now that presidential elections are paid for almost entirely by public money, the "special interests" have moved heavily into congressional campaigns, presumably with a disproportionate effect on public policy. What especially alarms Democrats is the sharp increase in corporation PACs (traditionally used more frequently by unions)—from 89 to over 600 in less than three years. They argue that the cost of congressional campaigns has risen too quickly, as evidenced by the special elections held over the past year to fill vacancies. In one instance, a winning Republican candidate spent over $500,000. Republicans have won four of the six recent special elections for House seats, outspending the Democrats in each instance. House Speaker Tip O'Neill, in endorsing the proposed cuts, declared that the special elections have been "auctions."

Evidently, it's shoe-top high on the majority side these days. Of course the special elections were expensive. They were symbolically important, they were the only game in town and each party was able to concentrate all its resources. None of this will be true in the fall with 435 House elections and 34 Senate races underway simultaneously. Democrats who were closely involved with the special elections deny they were simply lost by money.

It's true that the amount of special interest money in congressional races is increasing, but most of it is going where its donors calculate it will do the most good, namely to incumbents. And, almost twice as many of the incumbents happen to be Democrats. Common Cause has found that labor PACs contribute to incumbents 3-to-1 over their opponents, farm PACs 7-to-1, business PACs 4-to-1, lawyers 6-to-1 and so on. The new corporate political action committees that were expected to finance the resurrection of the Republican party are giving 60 percent of their money to Democrats. In total special interest contributions, the Democratic party outstripped the Republicans both last year and this. By contrast, the Republicans—normally thought to be the party of big money and big business—raised a large proportion of their current bankroll in small contributions garnered through direct mail programs.

This heavyhanded, partisan maneuver by Brademas and Thompson may jeopardize another Democratic plan which most Republicans like even less: public financing of congressional elections. Last year in the Senate, minority leader Howard Baker beat back public financing with a GOP filibuster, and most observers thought that was the end of it. However, Democratic liberals carefully laid plans to reintroduce the idea at the eleventh hour, apply public money *only to House races*, and thereby win approval in conference while avoiding another blocking action in the Senate. "This Congress is our best bet," says one strategist. "Labor is for it, the leadership is for it, we have respectable Republican co-sponsorship (Barber Conable of New York) and enough potential support among new members to get it passed. We may not see this opportunity again for ten years."

Like the spending limits, public financing is touted as a way of getting the special interests out of congressional campaigns. But the House bill, like the one that died in the Senate last year, incorporates a matching grant system for general elections only. Primary campaigns still would be funded in the traditional manner. Passed in that form, the bill probably would have the same effect as other post-Watergate reforms—to further weaken the political parties and to enhance the already considerable advantages enjoyed by incumbents.

Right now, 96 percent of all congressional incumbents who run for reelection win it. The two clearest trends of the past few congressional elections have been that there are fewer and fewer marginal districts—seats regarded as truly contestable—and fewer serious primary challenges. In part this is due to logrolling: district lines are drawn to protect incumbents of *both* parties. In part, also, it is due to the tendency of newly elected representatives to spend their first couple of terms behaving as errand boys for district interests, while using staff, special mailing privileges, congressional television and radio facilities and other perquisites to build up a cushion against challengers. The same advantages of office, plus the local party backing they routinely inherit and the special interest money they attract as a matter of course, make incumbent members from safe seats increasingly invulnerable to challenge from within their own parties. Among the House Democrats running for reelection this year, only one or perhaps two face serious primary challenges. Of the 12 Democratic Senators running for re-election this year, only one needs to worry about the party primary. On the Republican side, the moneyed right wing has ginned up challenges to moderate senators Edward Brooke and Clifford Case and Representative John Anderson of Illinois. Neither of the Senate challenges is regarded as threatening.

Because of the increasing invulnerability of incumbents, nearly all the genuinely contested congressional races in 1978 will be in districts where seats are unoccupied because a member is retiring. In other words, we have reached the point where the greatest source of turnover in the popularly elected body is the enticement of a lucrative pension.

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Because the latest public financing scheme for House elections does not include public money for primaries, and because no one has yet figured out a saleable way to neutralize the advantage incumbents inevitably enjoy in general elections, the skeptical view is that this reform won't change the present situation very much at all, at least in the short run. Just as it moved from presidential to congressional races after 1976, special interest money will simply move back one more step, to primaries, where it will concentrate, as it always does, in the pockets of the odds-on favorites to win, the incumbents.

Ken Bode

The story the White House press corps misses when it follows the President home.

The Other Side of the New South (I)

by Nick Kotz

Plains, Georgia

The fastest route out of the New South is to follow the paved road a few yards past Jimmy Carter's campaign headquarters, where it turns to dirt. About 300 yards further down, there is a ravaged, unpainted wooden shack, the first of half a dozen on both sides of the road. The Lassiter family lives there, eight black people crowded into three rooms. They live light years away from the fabled booming "sunbelt."

Alfred Lassiter, 85, a slim, spry man with a curly snow-white beard, and his wife Inez, 79, are struggling to care for six grandchildren on their old-age welfare payments of $190 a month. They pay $15 a month for a shack that defies any hope for renovation. There is no running water in the house; dishes are soaking in tubs on the table in the dimly-lit space that serves as kitchen and living room. There are no toilet facilities, and so the Lassiters use the falling-down outhouse of a neighbor across the road. They spend $100 a month in winter for gas heat, and are lucky at that. Many of the other shacks in and around Plains are heated by only a single wood stove. The wood costs $30 for a half cord.

"It pushes you so much to get by," Inez Lassiter said. "Our money runs out in about two weeks and then we have to borrow or do without. What we want is that prices come down and they give people jobs."

Mr. Lassiter still does odd jobs for white folks who sometimes pay him a dollar. The Lassiter grandchildren attend integrated schools directed mostly by white officials who have put their own children in the local segregation academy. Several of the Lassiter children and their black playmates recently were run out of the new little park in downtown Plains, told by a policeman that it was for tourists, not for them. The tourist business is not for them either. With the exception of one shopowner, black people are not sharing in the souvenir bonanza that has hit Plains.

I visited southwest Georgia to look at the problems of race and poverty in the rural South today. Reporting about people like the Lassiters seems like a flashback to the stories of the 1960s, and yes, of the 1930s or as far back as your knowledge of suffering in America carries you. There has been change—some of it dramatic, some of it modest. A few years ago the Lassiters might not have been able to get welfare, even though they were legally entitled. But terrible deprivation continues. Some of it actually has worsened, despite the sunbelt's prosperity and despite the rise of a new breed of "moderate" southern politician, including one who achieved the presidency.

The widely heralded industrial development of the New South has mostly bypassed areas where most blacks live. Although hundreds of thousands of new industrial jobs have been created, blacks actually have suffered a net loss of jobs.

The black Southern farmer is about to disappear. The last agricultural census revealed that blacks are losing their land so rapidly, that, if the present rate continues, there will be no black-owned farms left in 1990.

Federal housing aid to blacks in the rural South has plummeted in the last five years. The official explanation is that many black people today are simply too proud to participate in a housing program designed for poor people. Social service aid to the poor in the rural South is less today, in real terms, than it was five years ago.

Nick Kotz is co-author with Mary Lynn Kotz of *A Passion for Equality* (Norton). This is the first of a two-part report.

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Schools have been officially integrated but in some cases the victories have been pyrrhic. Black teachers have lost their jobs, white parents have sent their children to private academies and tax support for public schools has decreased. The remaining white children often are divided from blacks by controversial tracking systems.

And the civil rights movement is in shreds today, making it difficult to generate pressure on those in power to confront these problems.

Southwest Georgia, encompassing the city of Albany, the large town of Americus and the hamlet of Plains, is typical of areas of the rural South with large black populations. Martin Luther King came here in 1961. The "Albany Movement" was the first major mass-protest civil rights campaign of the 1960s. People in southwest Georgia are fond of quoting King, but it is not "I have a dream" or "I have been to the mountain top" that they recall. Instead, white leaders, with smug satisfaction, and black leaders, grimly, often repeat King's statement of regret that the civil rights movement had *failed* in Albany. The campaign lasted two years and thousands of blacks went to jail, but the white leadership never yielded a single concession. John F. Kennedy wondered aloud how an American President could meet with leaders of the Soviet Union, yet the city council of Albany couldn't bring itself to sit down with some poor black people. King eventually moved on to more promising targets, such as Birmingham and Selma.

But the Albany Movement did not end when King withdrew, taking the national publicity with him. The civil rights struggle there has continued quietly for almost two decades. In the ten years since Martin Luther King's death, things have changed for the better in Albany, and also in Americus and Plains, and even in the two rural county enclaves known to civil rights workers as "Terrible Terrell" and "Bad Bad Baker." The changes have come about partly because of new federal laws and partly because unheralded local black leaders have stayed on the battlefield there. Unfortunately, the basic changes that Martin Luther King hoped would result from his Gandhian non-violent protest have not occurred. The consciences of the whites have not been so touched that they support social progress because of the very Christian tenents so many of them espouse. By and large it is the letter of the civil rights laws, and not the spirit, that is obeyed. Many white churchgoers of the rural South still make their donations for overseas missionary work but care little about the misery of black people who live on the other side of town.

One battle that is far from over in the rural South, contrary to the common impression of outsiders, is voter registration.

White officials in the South have not exactly exerted themselves to register more black voters. In Sumter County, for example, where Plains is located, the registrar, despite three years of pressure from black leaders, has refused to appoint deputy registrars who would go out to reach people who can't make it to the courthouse in Americus during the regular weekday business hours. The state law authorizing such efforts was pushed through by Governor Jimmy Carter. The Sumter registrar did finally go out on weekends to three black registration rallies. He said that few people

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showed up, "indicating to me that everyone who wanted to register has done so."

Sherrill Marcus, field director of the Voter Education Project in Atlanta, disagrees. Marcus said that footdragging by officials in Sumter County (44 percent black population) is typical of registrars in counties throughout the South where blacks have potentially decisive voting strength but have not yet exercised it. Many blacks, he said, still shy away from the county courthouse, long the symbol of white oppression. Marcus complains that federal officials have been lax in enforcing the 1965 Voting Rights Act. A recent General Accounting Office investigation supports this view.

That Voting Rights Act was Martin Luther King's legacy to southwest Georgia, even though he did not win it there. The greatest black breakthrough in the South has been obtaining the vote and using it. Jimmy Carter would not have been elected to his current job without that vote, nor would the more than 2000 blacks now serving in state and local office in the South. There are 259 black elected officials in Georgia, compared to 21 a decade ago.

Twelve years ago Julian Bond was a lonely black in the Georgia legislature. The legislature tried to deny

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him his seat, ostensibly because he opposed the war in Vietnam. Today there are 24 black Georgian legislators—22 representatives and two Senators. Bond is an ebullient figure on the Senate floor, and its principal celebrity. He joshes freely and rubs elbows with his peers, who bring their black constituents to pose for pictures with Bond. The white senators court their own black voters, and on occasion even respond with legislation. The Georgia legislature has just enacted a fair employment practices law, under federal pressure.

Yet Bond and other black state legislators see much of the electoral change today as symbolic and cosmetic. Bond points out that today's "moderate" Southern governors have been elected as technocrats committed to improving the machinery of government, rather than as philosophical liberals committed to economic and social change. He sees great value in the disappearance of open racism in Southern politics, and approves of symbolic gestures such as Governor Carter placing King's portrait in the state capitol. But Bond sees little new real willingness to address the pressing needs of most Southern blacks.

"My colleagues are very clever at ingratiating themselves with a few blacks and think that serves as adequate representation," Bond said. "But most of these people are indifferent to the needs of poor people." For example, Bond noted, the state legislature had gone through an enormous fight over whether to raise welfare payments for a family of four from $141 a month to $147, an amount which is actually one dollar less than was paid in 1971. Bond believes economic issues of vital interest to blacks don't receive much attention today because the civil rights movement is no longer around to dramatize and publicize the problems of the poor.

For contrast Bond took me over to talk with James Paulk, 28, an insurance agent and banker, who represents part of southern Georgia in the state senate. "Meet a senator of the new South!" Bond said. Paulk was cordial to Bond and described how he soon would lead a three county religious crusade, which for the first time will be integrated. Paulk talked with me for a while about how much improved race relations are in Georgia. "I harbor no prejudice toward anyone," he insisted, and proceeded to talk about the principal problem of blacks—"making up the economic gap between themselves and whites."

"They want the luxuries of affluence but they lack the tools," Paulk said. "They are angry and frustrated and unwilling to work their way up. Some of the programs have increased those attitudes, created a welfare trap." He concluded, "I'm as conservative as anyone in the State Senate."

At the level of city and county government, the political change and the problems that remain are clearer. "Anyone who wants to be elected down here better pay attention to the black vote," said Frank Myers, an attorney who is the business leader and former mayor of Americus, the Sumter County seat, population 16,000, located ten miles east of Plains. Myers was elected with strong black backing on a pledge to end police brutality. He kept his promise, firing the police chief and eight officers. Blacks agree they have been treated far more civilly since helping to elect Myers and his successor, John Sheffield.

But, blacks have been able to elect only one of their own to office in Sumter County. They contend that the black vote is unfairly diluted because all city and county commissioners are elected "at large." With separate districts, the election of several blacks would be almost certain. A group of young blacks in Sumter County has filed a federal lawsuit opposing the at-large method of electing commissioners, and an identical suit has been filed in nearby Terrell County.

A similar lawsuit, charging dilution of the black vote, has succeeded in Albany, the 100,000-population business and industrial center of southwest Georgia. Federal district Judge Wilbur Owens ruled last year that white officials had purposely juggled the election system to minimize the black vote. Albany shifted to "at large" elections in 1948, after the US Supreme Court outlawed the all-white primary. Judge Owens ordered the election of city commissioners from districts. The first vote under the new system resulted in the election of three blacks out of six commissioners. The US Supreme Court has agreed to hear the voting dilution issue. If it upholds the black position, this will greatly increase black voting power all over the South.

A recent Albany City Commission meeting demonstrated the effect of new black political power, and the limitations. The three white commissioners, joined by Mayor James H. Gray, outvoted the blacks 4 to 3 to use certain federal funds to improve the central business district, including an historic preservation project, rather than use the funds to improve a low-income black neighborhood. Since last fall's election there have been many 4-3 votes along racial lines. The blacks were sorely disappointed when the whites voted 4-3 to deny the appointment of a black to even one of the six top city jobs. On the other hand, it is a great advantage simply to know what is going on in city government. Before the blacks were elected, the city returned federal community development funds rather than use them for the black poor. Now with black commissioners watching and keeping federal officials informed, part of these funds at least is being used for redevelopment of poor black areas, including a park for children whose previous recreation area was a dangerous polluted river. Streets are now being paved in the black areas of Plains, Americus and Dawson, after years of total neglect.

But there has been little improvement in housing conditions in the rural South. John Lewis, the former chairman of SNCC and now associate director of

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ACTION, says some of the housing in the rural South is "as bad as anything I've seen in west Africa." Landlords make little or no efforts at maintaining property, and governments don't try to require property owners to provide even basic amenities. Tenant rights have yet to be discovered.

Sarah Collier, 70, a black amputee who is confined to a wheelchair, lives with her daughter and two grandchildren in a wooden shack across the road from the famous First Baptist Church in Plains. There is no water in the house and a makeshift outhouse serves as a toilet. The ceiling is covered with cardboard, stained by watermarks from recent rains. The front door hangs loosely from one hinge. Pasted to it is an election sticker, reading "Firefighters for Carter." Mrs. Collier gets a $157 monthly welfare check, of which $30 is spent on wood for heating and cooking.

I visited also with David Harris, 60, who lives alone in the country outside Plains in a cinderblock house that lacks water, toilet facilities (indoor or outdoor) or any heating except a small wood stove. Crates serve as furniture. He makes $40 to $50 a week in a part-time job as gardener at a restaurant—one popular with the presidential press corps—after working most of his life loading pulpwood.

The worst housing I saw was in Americus. Ida Sampson, 36, lives with her large family in one of a dozen shacks located less than ten yards from the railroad tracks. The house has no running water or toilet—"We just take a pot and go down the railroad tracks"—and the only heat is from a wood stove. When I visited her, rain was pouring through holes in the ceiling into holes in the floor, through which rats commute from a nearby garbage dump. Several windows are covered only by thin, torn plastic. Mrs. Sampson supports her six children on a $162 monthly welfare check and minimum-wage earnings from a seasonal job grading peanuts. She pays $37.50 a month in rent and spends $50 a month for wood in the winter. She said that when she asked the landlord to do something about the wind whistling through the house, he replied, "Well, just open the door and let it out."

There are hundreds of black families in Sumter County living in the same housing conditions as the Sampsons. Little effort has been made to help them. "Our blacks have had a long suffering attitude," said former Americus Mayor Myers. "If I lived in those shacks, I would tear up the town. But if you put all the tax money in Americus into housing you couldn't dent the problem." The 1970 census revealed that 51 percent of blacks in Sumter County were living in poverty, and two-thirds lived in a house lacking some plumbing facilities. Things haven't improved very much since 1970, and these figures are representative of the condition of blacks all over the rural South as a whole.

The federal agency charged with improving the housing of the rural poor has greatly reduced its efforts in recent years. The Farmers Home Administration, part of the Agriculture Department, provided 21,573 housing loans to Southern rural blacks in 1971, but by 1976 the program was serving only 10,823. Last year, the black share of FmHA housing loans was the lowest it has been since 1965, the year that anti-discrimination procedures in the agency first went into effect. Blacks got 19 percent of the housing loans in 1971 but only nine percent in 1976. In Georgia, FmHA housing loans to rural blacks fell even more sharply, from 2098 in 1971 to only 517 in 1976.

The official government explanation for this decline is that an increased number of blacks today are too poor even to qualify for this low-income program. But I heard a different kind of explanation when I visited the Sumter County FmHA office in Americus. The bulletin board in the reception room of the FmHA office is plastered with notices describing the Agriculture Department's policies against discrimination. But the wall inside FmHA county supervisor Hugh Gleaton's office has another kind of display. Gleaton has displayed photographs of a black family being evicted by US marshals from a brick FmHA-financed home. One picture shows dishes piled in the kitchen; another shows the evicted family's possessions piled in the front yard. When I asked why FmHA loans to blacks had dropped off so sharply in recent years, Gleaton pointed to the pictures. "Black people don't know how to adjust," Gleaton said. "The marshal threw 21 people of of that house. White people, you can put them in a subdivision. But not blacks. Nine out of ten will follow the worst example. They won't do what they should do. They fuss and fight like animals, shacking with each other's wives. It's a mess." Gleaton said he once had 27 black families living in one of his developments but is now down to five. He simply has decided that blacks shouldn't live in developments.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development's urban housing programs also are not working well in southwest Georgia. An effort at self-help housing out of the War on Poverty era produced about a dozen houses in Plains, but that program has collapsed. The most successful effort to provide low-cost housing to the black poor is a private one by Koinonia, a white communal farm located near Plains. A non-profit venture, Koinonia has built several dozen homes, for which the buyers make $85 a month interest-free payments.

What little public housing that has been built in Americus is tightly segregated, a condition now being challenged in a federal lawsuit. Reverend R. L. Freeman, president of the Americus chapter of the NAACP, recently tried to get a black school teacher to file suit when she was denied housing in a clearcut case of discrimination, but the woman refused, fearful she would lose her job. "I'll tell you in one word how things are changing down here," Freeman said. "Slowly."

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Arts and Lives

Stanley Kauffmann on films

All in the Family

Summer Paradise (Cinema 5). This is a family film in two senses. First, the film itself.

It begins with a woman in her sixties opening her apartment door but keeping the chain on. Outside is a woman of her own age whom she recognizes and admits. The first woman turns out to be a doctor, the second a social worker; they are old friends who frequently quarrel but who remain friends because their friendship is so old that, if for no other reason, it must be respected for its age. The doctor is closing her office, about to leave for the summer home where her family gathers every year. The social worker is off to a couple of conferences but will later join the doctor's family at the summer place.

From the fissure of the open/chained door, this Swedish film moves into a tale of openings-up that still keep on their guard chains. The shape of the story is familiar, but it's always an interesting device when used with insight: a social form is probed to show that it contains much that contradicts the sentiment of the form. In this case the family's annual reunion at the summer house, with some friends present, is and is not the pleasant occasion that the initial moments promise. If it were only what it seems to be at the start, the film would be soppy: if it were only the exact opposite, it would have the peculiar untruth of mere cynicism trying to "expose" human feeling.

The doctor, Birgitta Valberg, picks up her little granddaughter at the home of her older daughter, the stunning Agneta Ekmanner, who is in bed with a new boyfriend when Valberg arrives. The doctor and the child go on ahead to be followed by the others. Up at the (lovely) country home, Valberg meets *her* parents. This focus on an old person that suddenly shifts to the old person's parents reminds one of the sudden lengthening of perspective in Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* when Victor Sjöstrom, the old protagonist, suddenly goes to visit his mother. And this reminder of Bergman is not only in order, it brings up the second sense in which this is a family picture.

Summer Paradise was directed—her debut—by Gunnel Lindblom, familiar as a Bergman actress (the randy sister in *The Silence*, for instance). Lindblom has assisted Bergman on several of his theater productions and has herself directed in the theater. This first film of hers, made in 1976, was produced by Bergman.

The script was adapted from a novel by Ulla Isaksson by Isaksson and Lindblom. (The former wrote, among other scripts, *The Virgin Spring*.) The "family" feeling of the film's making is pervasive and somehow cozy, like recognizing facial features in nephews and nieces. The summer reunion recalls the flashbacks in *Wild Strawberries*, the pivotal use of Midsummer Night recalls *Smiles of a Summer Night*, the TV flash of horror news from Lebanon recalls the Vietnam news on TV in *Persona*. These and other resemblances could hardly have occurred unwittingly: clearly, in form and subject and cinematic style, Lindblom is declaring herself a disciple of Bergman's. As such, she gets high marks. *Summer Paradise* is something like an early Bergman film made by a later Bergman. This material wouldn't interest him today as much as it once did, but it shows controls and balances that he didn't always have in his earlier days. So if *Summer Paradise* is not innovative or expanding in any way, it has a lot of pleasures in its making and in its humane concerns.

About 15 characters are involved in the story, each of whom has some sort of drama or development. Synopsis would be pointless and unwieldy. The skill in the script and the direction is best shown by the fact that we never get the feeling of having to wait until each character gets a turn, like a long vaudeville bill. All *seems* to go forward more or less simultaneously and interrelatedly, as the summer house gets filled up with loves and troubles and disappointments and reconciliations and the inevitable strand of tragedy. Characters are drawn with an eye to contradictions. Valberg herself, for instance, is not just lovable old Grandma Doctor, though she is that, too: she is a woman who didn't know how to live with a man and has passed the defect on in some degree to both her daughters, the older of whom seems, besides her harvesting of males, to have some interest in lesbianism. Valberg's father is a doting old patriarch but is also an egocentric king for whom respect comes both naturally and hard. The social worker, when she gets there, is happy to be with these people in this place, but she is driven almost to madness by their complete disregard of the ills and stupidities in the world that are, she believes, pushing mankind toward doom. All this is interwoven with the dailiness of each day—with the food for instance. Molnar says, truly, in *The Play's the Thing*: "Audiences always like to see actors eating." The great platters and bowls of beautiful food passed around the outdoor luncheon table do a great deal to certify the plus side of the family's ledger and to provide the atmosphere against which poignancy is created.

Why is it all not soap opera? Mod soap opera, of course, in which Problems mil-

Films Worth Seeing

Blue Collar. Detroit auto workers and unionism today. Script keeps sliding, but the picture of that world is sharp and steady.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind. The Film God—tremendous images, engulfing sound—using the UFO as its subject matter. Stunning.

The Goodbye Girl. Neil Simon. Much more organic script than most of his theater comedy, buzzing along under Herbert Ross's skillful hand.

Saturday Night Fever. Vividly drawn city-within-a-city. John Travolta fine as the Saturday-night faun.

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itate. Well, I'm not absolutely sure that it's *not* soap opera—that is, a braid of small-scale domestic dramas presented more for the exercise of familiar responses than for any real extension of experience. (Quite unlike Bergman's *Scenes from a Marriage*, for instance, which cuts clean away from any such suspicion.) But, first of all, good soap opera is in one way like good anything: namely, good. Second, the intensity with which the materials of the various dramas are connected with matters larger than themselves gives them, if not depth, at least some status. Third, unlike Mazursky's recent *An Unmarried Woman*, there is no feeling of a check-list of hot topics being ticked off: the troubles and trials seem generated and spontaneous. Thus the script doesn't live beyond its means. And last—again unlike Mazursky—it's well done.

Lindblom has modeled her directing on her master's. The camera movement and the editing follow the impulse of the scene. Such dogmas as reaction shots or "Don't cut between lines" mean nothing to her. The filming seems to fit each sequence like a well-tailored garment: no wrinkles, no droops, no shortages. The only moment that bothered me was the very last when the camera closed up on the freeze-frame shot of an autistic boy. (He's the son of Ekmanner's woman friend.) I wasn't disturbed so much because of the resemblance to the last moment of *The Four Hundred Blows* but because I didn't know why we were ending with him, of all characters. Why not the old doctor with whom we began?

Tony Forsberg's color photography is in the discreet Gunnar Fischer-Sven Nykvist line, though not quite up to it. Alan Blair's subtitles are succinct. The actors are exactly what we want: we feel they've always been there, have never done anything but live these lives.

Only a few of them are familiar. Valberg played von Sydow's wife in *The Virgin Spring*. Sif Ruud, the social worker, has been in various Bergman films. Ekmanner was in Sontag's *Duet for Cannibals*. The patriarch is Holger Löwenadler, who was the girl's father in Malle's *Lacombe Lucien*. And lest Lindblom seem guilty (some guilt!) of using a lot of fine actors who do all the acting work *for* her, so to speak, I note the mordant performance of the autistic boy by Toni Magnusson, in which the director must surely have figured.

But the fact that only a few of the faces were familiar, and none of them was *very* familiar, made me wonder about the different effect that this film must have had in Sweden. Not because of the language: my question could apply to a British film or if I understood Swedish. All of these actors, most of them relatively new to me, are well-known to Swedish audiences, some of them through decades in various Swedish theaters, all of them through films we have not seen or through TV. I saw people, then actors. A Swedish audience would see actors, then people. There are advantages both ways, if the work is good, but it made me realize again that any picture shipped out of its country of origin becomes to some degree a different film. (I once saw *M*A*S*H* with Icelandic subtitles in Reykjavik, and I'd give a great deal to know what the absolutely silent audience thought they were seeing.) For me, meeting many of these actors for the first time in *Summer Paradise* gave the picture a dimension of *verismo;* but seeing them again, as I hope I shall do in other pictures, will give me a somewhat different pleasure: affirmations of shared experience.

Correction. In reviewing Kurosawa's *Dersu Usala* (*TNR*, Feb. 4) I said it was his latest picture since *Red Beard*. In fact his last previous firm was *Dodes' ka-den* (1970).

Vietnam as Fable

We have looked a decade or more for a cultural interpretation of the Vietnam war that would, if not satisfy, at least prove acceptable to the whole country. Now Hollywood and a few writers are in the process of giving us one. What they are saying is that we should ignore the hard parts and consider Vietnam as simply a time of temporary national madness.

The aberrant interpretation is very appealing, even though it may be as glib

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as the domino theory. And no one should be surprised that, like survivors of other unpopular wars, we are ready to settle for it.

I was given a preview of the future seven years ago when I met an obscure screenwriter named John Melius in Paris. I was, as I recall, with two friends, Pierre Schoendoerffer and Claude Boutillon; and over a champagne brunch at the Plaza-Athenée, Melius, a blustery but likable fellow, described to us the screenplay he'd just done on Vietnam.

Melius had not seen the war. Schoendoerffer had made two highly regarded films on Vietnam, *Section 317* and *The Anderson Platoon*. Ms. Boutillon, a doctor sent to Cambodia in 1970 by a French medical journal, had been captured and held by the Viet Cong in a jungle prison. My credits were slimmer: I'd served as an Army intelligence officer and Vietnamese linguist, and later had reported from Saigon for *Time* and for this journal.

Our meeting was something more than a predictable matter of persons with first-hand knowledge squaring off with someone who was writing from a distance. Combat experience has never been a requirement for making war movies. One does expect, however, a bow toward the truth of the situation, and this seemed to be missing in Melius's screenplay. I remember how absurd I even thought the title. He called it *Apocalypse Now*.

Apocalypse Now has undoubtedly undergone many rewrites since Melius first told us about it. Scheduled for release this fall, it is directed by Francis Coppola, who made *The Godfather*. Press reports describe the movie as "an offbeat adaptation of Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, with Marlon Brando as the 'great white God' Kurtz character."

Actually, it sounds to me now suspiciously like a borrowed version of Pierre Schoendoerffer's 1969 war novel which was set in Borneo, *Farewell to the King*, which is itself derivative of *Heart of Darkness* and Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King*.

Millions of dollars, we are told, have been spent in recreating the Cambodian temples at Angkor Wat. Of course, no American soldiers—and very few tourists—came within a hundred miles of Angkor Wat during the war.

Francis Coppola is out to entertain us with a tale of high madness. And though other Vietnam films are set for release before his, *Apocalypse Now*, with its incredibly huge budget (upwards of 25 million) and the hype sure to accompany it, will probably cement itself in the minds of the young movie-going audience as representative of the Vietnam war—Angkor Wat and all.

© Philip Jones Griffiths (Magnum Photos)

It makes one wonder how the directors of the past managed to give us such excellent films that illustrated the absurdity and corruption of war, while sticking to the facts. Jean Renoir's perfectly keyed *La Grande Illusion* and Stanley Kubrick's rather heavy *Paths of Glory* come quickly to mind.

Yet Coppola and Melius cannot be faulted entirely for their freewheeling madness-is-money approach. They are entertainers and businessmen, after all, not historians; and the literature of Vietnam is nothing if not inconsistent in its interpretation of the war. The vacuum is theirs to fill, as a brief look at some of the books published thus far will illustrate.

Before the American buildup in 1965, the books coming out were mainly educational in type (Bernard Fall's *Hell in a Very Small Place* is the best example), with several predicting disaster (Halberstam's *Making of a Quagmire*). From then until the Tet offensive, the interpretation of the war tentatively became "an agonizing moral dilemma." Ward Just's fine report, *To What End*, and Richard A. Falk's *The Vietnam War and International Law*, which contained, among others, an essay by Dean Rusk, were two notable works of this genre. (As a matter of fact, 1967 seems to have been the benchmark year of dispassionate writing on Vietnam, but I'll get back to that in a moment.)

Books, like the country, turned conclusively antiwar in 1968. Many of those published in the first year or so after Tet reflected a sympathetic interest in North Vietnam, or an outrage at the technological destruction in the South. This was the literary beginning of the "bad American-good Vietnamese" interpretation of the war, which prevailed, in one form or other, until the recent publication of *Dispatches* by Michael Herr.

The proponents of this explanation believe that America was wrong about Vietnam. They admired, more or less, the tenacity and discipline of the Vietnamese opposition. The literary com-

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munity was often exposed to an extreme version, largely as a result of the ascendance in the late 1960s of the *New York Review of Books* and its chief polemicist, Noam Chomsky. Chomsky's Americans, as viewed in his *At War with Asia*, were murderous imperialists and his Vietnamese were possessed of a thousand virtues.

Jean-Paul Sartre had published *On Genocide* in 1969, an essay supplemented by the findings of the Bertrand Russell war crimes tribunal. Chomsky was further reinforced in 1970 by the publication of Seymour Hersh's *My Lai 4* and Daniel Lang's *Casualties of War*. His interpretation reached its most influential point in 1971, when Neil Sheehan wrote a lead article for the *NY Times Book Review*, entitled "Should We Have War Crime Trials?", in which he suggested that US military officers and Lyndon Johnson were conscious war criminals.

Three months after Sheehan's inquisitorial piece appeared, the *Pentagon Papers* were revealed to the public, with Sheehan playing a major role in their release. The following year Frances FitzGerald published *Fire in the Lake*, a well written and expertly organized synthesis of other authors' works on Vietnam. (French scholar Paul Mus, the greatest thinker on Vietnam and from whom FitzGerald took the underlying thesis of her book, still remains largely unknown to American intellectuals.) On its heels came David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*, a portentous treatment of Washington gossip that fleshed out the *Pentagon Papers*.

Both FitzGerald and Halberstam were, to one degree or other, impassioned subscribers to the "bad American-good Vietnamese" theory. But the cumulative effect of the *Pentagon Papers*, *Fire in the Lake* and *The Best and the Brightest* was to chip away at any simplistic interpretation of our involvement in Vietnam. At root, these works showed our massive misunderstanding, our almost total misperception of an Asian culture. Together, they constituted an indictment of the cultural insensitivity and the unconscious arrogance of everyone—from ex-Harvard dean to GI.

They should have opened the door to other thoughtful examinations of our actions in Vietnam and our relationship with the rest of the world. But they didn't. Indeed, some critics seemed all too ready to shut off any further discussion of the war.

In March 1974, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt began his review of James Jones's *Viet Journal* in the *New York Times* like this: "Quick—before your mind fogs up at the prospect of yet another report on Vietnam. . . ." *Time*'s chief critic, R.Z. Shepherd, called Jones's work "a book about Viet Nam for a public that does not want to hear anything more about Viet Nam."

The country was undeniably war-weary, the ceasefire had been signed the year before. Still, this negative attitude toward the publication of Vietnam books by two of the nation's most powerful organs—whose prophecies have a way of becoming self-fulfilling—was close to being an act of censorship. The ripple effect was immediately noticeable in the attitude of other reviewers across the country. How many manuscripts of merit, we shall never know, were later turned down by publishers because "the public doesn't want to hear about it."

Moreover, their reading of the book public's mind didn't hold up in the light of available evidence. Vietnam books had been bestsellers for the previous four consecutive years. And there were never more than 30 new titles (out of over 35,000 books published annually) printed on Vietnam in any given year. These ranged from books on Vietnamese cookery to a convoluted tale of cultural shock by Susan Sontag, a Europe-oriented intellectual writing about her trip to Hanoi.

In fact, the Library of Congress has six card catalog drawers of books about Vietnam, with only two of them concerning the decade-long conflict. Korea takes up 10 drawers—one on the three-year war. And since the Second World War consumes one hundred and twenty drawers, Vietnam books hardly appear overwhelming in number.

For whatever combination of reasons, the publication of Vietnam books dropped dramatically after 1974, to about a dozen titles a year. The *Times Book Review* declined to mention many of them, even in its "Books in Brief" section. The most notable works of the post-ceasefire period were by American prisoners of war. Their reports of torture in Hanoi did much to suggest that the Vietnamese were not necessarily possessed of the full thousand virtues.

The Chomsky interpretation, it became clear during this time, was unsatisfactory—too filled with self-righteousness and finger-pointing, inappropriate now that the war was over. The men who had fought in Vietnam posed the greatest difficulty in the formulation of a suitable new interpretation. Obviously we were to have no Sgt. Yorks or Audie Murphys, but were we to consider every one of them a Pvt. Meadlo of My Lai?

Robert Jay Lifton's *Home from the War* (Touchstone; $3.95), a stacked deck of interviews solely with Vietnam Vets Against the War, attempted to lay the expiatory guilt for US actions on the heads of the conscripted underclass sent to fight.

Friendly Fire (Bantam; $2.75) by C.D.B. Bryan was closer to the mark in its refusal to be dogmatic. The battalion commander of the younger soldier killed accidentally by US artillery turned out to be not the usual military stereotype, but a sensitive and intelligent officer, himself ruined by the war. And the tepid reception given Gloria Emerson's *Winners and Losers* (HBJ; $4.95), which was Chomskyesque in interpretation, signaled that we would now look at our servicemen with a more charitable eye.

Last year came the successful *A Rumor of War* (HRW; $10.95), by Phil Caputo, an unspectacular but well crafted account of his tour as a Marine lieutenant, shocking in its revelation near the end that he shared responsibility for the murder of two innocent Vietnamese teenagers. Caputo pleaded that the insanity of the war (this was 1965) had made him do it, and the critics generously agreed. Theodore Solotaroff said, "The ultimate effect of this book is to make the personal and public responsibility [for the war] merge into a nightmare of horror and waste."

Then a few months ago John Leonard announced in a daily *Times* review: "If you think you don't want to read any more about Vietnam, you are wrong." His enthusiasm was revitalized by Mike Herr's *Dispatches* (Knopf; $8.95), a poetic celebration of violence and death, actually an edited collection of articles written for *Esquire* nearly 10 years ago, whose recurring theme is of drugs and madness. The Sunday *Book Review* critic called *Dispatches* the best book to be

"LAST WEEK Mr. Carter picked Mrs. Mondale for Honorary Head of the Federal Council of the Arts and Humanities. Working on a budget of three or four million dollars, Mrs. Mondale will supervise the preparation of a major study of the cultural policies of the United States, looking to the adoption of a coherent and orderly policy. Mrs. Mondale's credentials are as follows. And besides, she is a coherent and orderly lady."

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written about the Vietnam war, and said, "Herr's literary style derives from the era of acid rock, the Beatles films, of that druggy, Hunter Thompson once-removed-from-reality appreciation of The Great Cosmic Joke."

Herr's once-removed-from-reality interpretation coincided with the direction Hollywood was moving, and it contained elements that the whole country had already begun to agree upon: the concept of the veteran as a victim of the war's madness. If we could not give them our admiration as in past wars, we could at least treat them solicitously like outpatients of an insane asylum. This, of course, would include Rusty Calley, as well as the 85 percent of the two and a half million men to serve in Vietnam who never saw combat.

In this interpretation, the paraplegic becomes the heroic victim, Vietnam's truly sad equivalent of the Second World War's Medal of Honor winner, his paralysis symbolic of both the physical and the psychological maiming of our men. *Born on the 4th of July* (Pocket Books; $1.95) by Ron Kovic, an antiwar paraplegic, had been given a laudatory, page-one treatment by the *New York Times Book Review* a year or so before *Dispatches* came out. And Jane Fonda's current film, *Coming Home*, will do its part to further legitimize the theme. It's described as "a story of a woman whose life and marriage to a Marine captain (Bruce Dern) are changed by her relationship with a paraplegic veteran (Jon Voight)." Other films are in the works that portray the war-ravaged veteran as a psychopath.

Where does this leave us? Well, so far it leaves me with no films and only two Vietnam books I could recommend for the bookbag of anyone headed to a deserted island. They are Jonathan Schell's *The Village of Ben Suc* (out of print) and *The United States in Vietnam* (Dell; $2.95) by George McTurnan Kahin and John W. Lewis. Both were written in 1967, and both I believe will stand the rigorous test of time. I'd also recommend, with certain qualifications, the *Pentagon Papers* (Bantam; $2.25) and also Tiziano Terzani's *Giai Phong!* (Ballantine; $1.95), a vivid sketch of Saigon's "liberation"—as the title says—in 1975.

The Village of Ben Suc by Schell, then a 24-year-old ex-Harvard student, is a classic eyewitness report on the destruction of a Vietnamese village by the optimistic can-do Americans who were trying to pacify the area. *The United States in Vietnam*, authored (and revised in '69) by two Cornell University professors, is thin in many parts but remains the only general work of note to be published that vaguely approaches traditional standards of scholarship.

Novels present another problem. The Vietnam war was probably too diffuse to be contained in a tightly-focused combat novel as Mailer did in *The Naked and the Dead*. William Turner Huggett's *Body Count* (Dell; $1.75), published in 1973 and now in paperback, is the best of the lot so far. *Sand in the Wind* (Pinnacle; $2.25) by Robert Roth contains the most chilling account ever written of Marine Corps basic training. But there has been no real challenger to Graham Greene's aging novel, *The Quiet American* (Penguin; $1.95). David Rabe's short play, *Streamers* (Knopf; $7.95), stands by itself as the most powerful work of fiction to be done on the Vietnam-era soldier.

Mary McGrory not long ago reread John Hersey's World War II novel, *A Bell For Adano* (AMSCO Scholastic; $2.95), and wondered in her syndicated column why there were no good Major Joppolos in Vietnam. This is one of many problems I have with the dope-and-dementia interpretation of Vietnam. As anyone who covered the war could tell her, there were indeed a number of Major Joppolos in Vietnam—easily hundreds, usually young captains assigned to some backwater village, good, decent Americans. These men and many others who served in Vietnam deserve much better, but I'm afraid they are not going to get it. The best I suppose we can leave them are the words of another soldier, Napoleon, who said, "What is history but a fable agreed upon?"

Zalin Grant

Zalin Grant is the author of *Survivors* (Norton), and lives in Spain.

Books Considered

Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph by Edgar Johnson

(Viking; $15)

Viewed in its lowest terms, Dickens's career is the most miraculous success-story in English literary records: the sensitive, imaginative 12-year-old (his family in the debtors' prison), cut off from education, sentenced, apparently for life, to miserable toil, achieving, by the end of the next 12 years, sudden fame throughout the English-speaking world. The lonely child's hopeless months in the blacking factory the man never revealed until, a few years before *David Copperfield*, an accidental happening compelled disclosure to his friend and counselor, John Forster. We may ask ourselves—echoing the middle-aged Dickens's recollection of his parents' ready acquiescence in his fate—what he would have become if he had been able to go through a good school and Cambridge University: no doubt—if he had stayed the course—he might have avoided some faults of his early novels, but his unique gifts might well have been dulled or misdirected, and he could hardly have absorbed his richly sympathetic knowledge of the mass of a common humanity, who gave him his chief character, the city of London, and inspired his lifelong outlook on people and institutions. Professor Johnson quotes that much-quoted utterance of 1869, the year before he died: "My faith in the people governing is, on the whole, infinitesimal; my faith in the People governed is, on the whole, illimitable." Dickens would perhaps have admitted what his novels abundantly showed, that "the People" included a fair number of the heartless and corrupt.

Forster in his biography had the general advantage of sharing Dickens's literary milieu and the climate of the age, and the special advantage of knowing, up to a point, his close friend's character and temperament, and his work,

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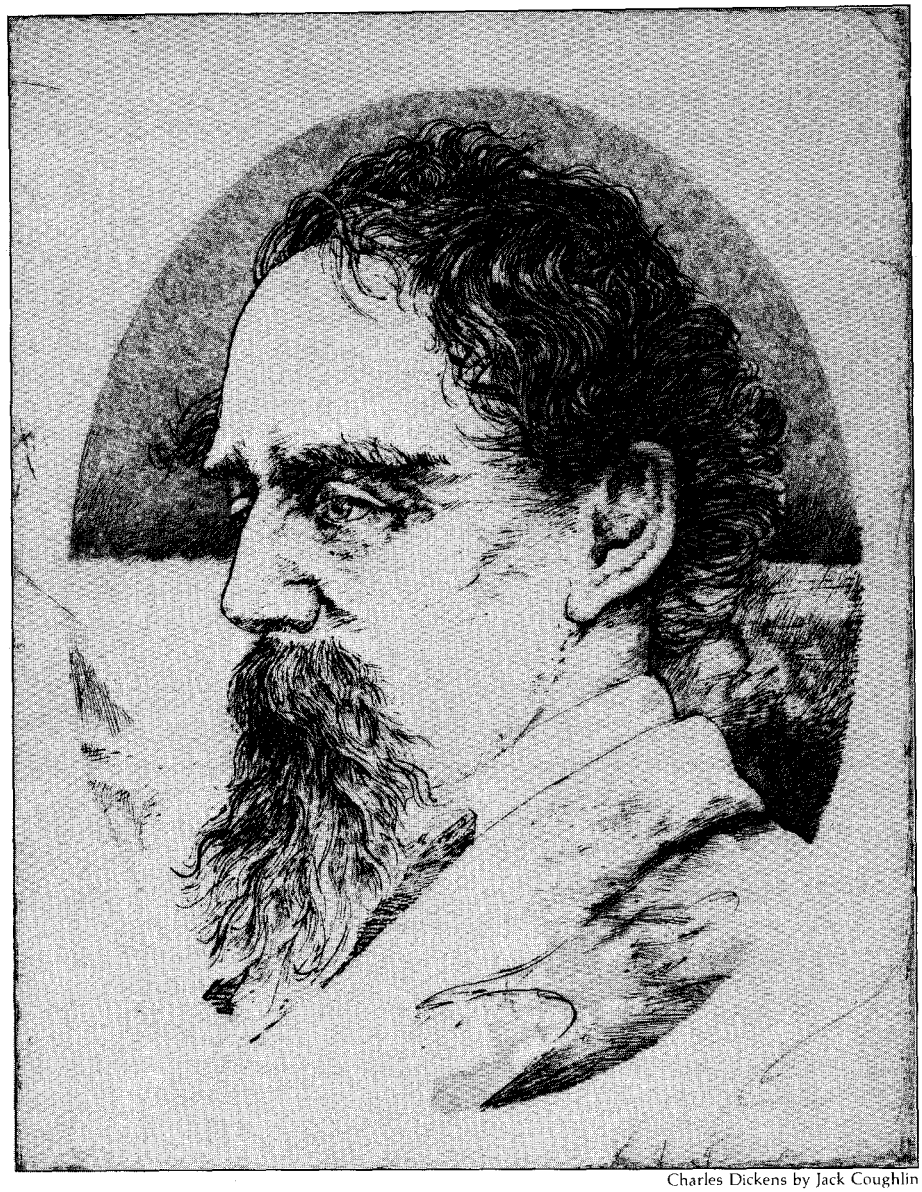
whatever its inadequacies, remains of value. Johnson, in his two-volume *Charles Dickens* of 1952, had, along with a brisker style, the complementary advantages of a long and large perspective, freedom from the restraints Forster in 1872 had to observe, and full command of the immense mass of materials, from Dickens's letters to the accumulated scholarship and criticism of more than a century. This work immediately took its place as the standard modern biography. The present "revised and abridged" edition will doubtless supersede the larger work for most of the general public. Its 601 pages make a substantial book, roughly half the length of the original text. It omits all of the full scholarly apparatus but retains the many interesting illustrations of persons, buildings, and scenes (except one of the frontispiece portraits). The largest reduction is the dropping of the 12 chapters given to critical discussions of the novels; these are replaced as a rule by comments of a little less or more than a page. In short, what we have now is a clear, quite detailed, thoroughly reliable, and thoroughly fascinating narrative of the multifarious activities and events that made up Dickens's personal and literary life, a book likely to attract readers who are concerned much less about critical assessments of the works than about their author, driven by his restless, feverish vitality and circumstance through a succession of dramas big and little, happy and unhappy, until he was burned out at 58. The book gives countless glimpses of Dickens's personality and of his and the public world, though not any extended account of the surging ideas and conflicts that kept Victorian England in a ferment of social, political, and religious agitation, agitation to which Dickens, through his fiction and directly, contributed so much. Johnson sticks pretty closely to concrete evidence, but that intensifies the many emotional pressures in the story. With all his admiration for his hero, Johnson is scrupulously candid and fair-minded, whether his subject is the young author's struggles to break out of the network of publishing contracts in which he involved himself or the later and very different crisis of Dickens's breaking away from his wife and involving himself with Ellen Ternan; he is not tempted into special pleading.

Something may be said of the general change in critical focus and opinion in the past several decades, even though it has become an accepted fact of life.



Charles Dickens by Jack Coughlin

During Dickens's century and beyond, fastidious highbrows could look down their noses at the popular idol and prefer Thackeray. In recent times Thackeray's stock seems to have fallen considerably, while Dickens has been acclaimed by modern highbrows as certainly the greatest of English novelists and one of the three or four greatest in the world. The reasons are not those that caused his dazzling debut. The multitudes of Victorian enthusiasts, however responsive to Dickens's early strains of melodrama and overdrawn pathos, were positively intoxicated by his great comic characters. But, beginning with *Dombey and Son* (though relaxing in *David Copperfield*), Dickens renounced those magnificently garrulous and wayward eccentrics and achieved firm and sober control of large and coherent themes. The young Henry James quite misread the change: in a review of 1865 (reprinted in 1908) he declared that, from *Bleak House* onward, Dickens's great resource, the lively fantastic, failed him, and, relying on a fancy that was dead, he was increasingly forced, labored, and mechanical, reaching his nadir in *Our Mutual Friend*.

As we all know, in 1940-41 George Orwell and Edmund Wilson started a revolution that set Dickens on a throne even higher than the one he had long occupied. The later Dickens, in Johnson's words, attempted, with a "grimmer and more comprehensive vision," "nothing less than an anatomy of modern society." At the same time the unevenly inspired writer became a conscious and subtle craftsman in structure and style, a master of "myth" and symbol. He was recognized as an influence on Dostoevsky, was admired by Proust and Shaw, and—to diversify briefly what could be a long catalogue—he has been lately named as a desert-island choice by no less than Erica Jong.

The large shift in critical opinion might be epitomized in the remarkable somersaults of Dr. and Mrs. F. R. Leavis.

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After relegating Dickens (with the sole exception of his "masterpiece," *Hard Times*, his one "completely serious work of art") to the role of crude popular entertainer, they came around in 1960-70 to exalting him as a supreme master. But, far from acknowledging their own earlier blindness, they damned various critics who held the views they themselves had formerly proclaimed. For a full, witty, and incisive account of the unabashedly disingenuous behavior of this prickly pair one may urge the reading of George H. Ford's article in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (volume 26, 1971); Ford does not fail to praise the insight that attended their belated illumination.

Those of us who began in childhood with uncritical delight in the "old" Dickens may welcome the critical revolution as almost all to the good. I say "almost" because it seems to have entailed some undue disparagement or neglect of Dickens's earlier books. Without questioning the sophisticated and much superior power of the later ones, we may wonder if some interpreters of the new Dickens are aware that, with all his growth in vision and artistry, he was from the start one of the world's greatest humorists, a title that is much too rare to be sniffed at.

Douglas Bush

Douglas Bush is Gurney Professor of English Literature Emeritus at Harvard.

The Mutual Friend by Frederick Busch

(Harper & Row; $8.95)

The Mutual Friend is the third work of fiction by Frederick Busch to appear in this country, though earlier work has been published in England. It is a venturesome novel, a substantial achievement, and it should be widely read. For the author of *Manual Labor* and *Domestic Particulars*, this new work represents a change. The previous books were in some sense family documents—intensely personal texts, charged with contemporary discourse and present problems. Busch seemed a kind of poet of claustrophobia. Whether writing of the city or farm, in Brooklyn or New England's hills, he stayed very close to the bone. His characters had *Breathing Trouble*, as in an early title; he cut tight, constricting circles, and had his people leashed.

Now the circles have enlarged. *The Mutual Friend*, as its name should suggest, owes a great deal to Charles Dickens. It starts with Dickens in America, on a reading tour, and ends with the end of the 19th century, in a London charity hospital. The book is steeped in Victoriana, and London is vivid throughout. Its docks and teeming almshouses, warrens and thoroughfares have a dark glitter worthy of the "Inimitable"—as Dickens signed his letters. But it is Dolby, his amanuensis, here who writes:

> *Especially in the neighborhood of the Ratcliffe Highway and its opium dens—the short crazy streets which gleamed as if with slime at midnight, and across which maddened victims of the world would scurry like awful insects. We walked through the rooms which smelled of sewage and despair to see the men—and women, too!—lying curled around their charcoal burners, pipes in their mouths like long hard teats, dead to us, who stalked among them, gawking, tall, nourished and superior, like men from another world. He clapped his hands together softly and muttered to himself, made notes, and waded in the ocean of the poor. I will tell you: it was the real world; anything else was verbiage, illusion, and still is.*

Busch's erudition has been put to fruitful use. The scholarship is unobtrusive yet always germane. His habit of disjunction (the stock-in-trade of a short-story writer, perhaps) seems formally appropriate: the novel has six separate units. To list them suggests the book's tone.

We open with "A Man of Parts," with the Inimitable stranded by a snowstorm in Utica, New York. Then the locus shifts to "A Maid Looks Back and Laughs"—wherein we meet Barbara the Whore, one of Dickens's reclamation projects (who puts her previous skills to the service of Dickens's son Porn). Next we are introduced to "An English Mother" and hear from Dickens's estranged wife Kate her own grim tale of severance. Then George Dolby, the road manager of The Great American Tour, provides us with "The Remembrance of his Friend." Next comes "Sin Overrated and Abandoned," the lament of Ellen Ternan Robinson, Dickens's mistress. And, last, a dazzling compound of voices titled "Who, of All, May Speak?"

Here Dickens composes his will, then dies. His shadow Dolby does the same, almost 30 years later—confronting Ellen Robinson and observed by a mute-seeming final witness, Moon. There is data from Charles Booth's work-sheets, and the Ratcliffe Highway song about Black Sarah. There is even a railway passenger reading *David Copperfield* and insulting its sick author, in a page torn from *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The effect is fugal, and the effort to trick time.

As such brief summary should suggest, this is a risky business. Whole sections of the novel are lifted from Dickens; his will is transcribed verbatim, as are swatches of the scenes—Nancy Sykes's murder, for instance—he read to such acclaim. Dolby, writing from the cougher's ward in 1899, reproduces his published memoirs, and provides us into the bargain with recipes for punch.

But the greater risk, of course, entails the great original; why should the reader not disregard Busch and turn again to Dickens? Nor, with Edgar Johnson's biography available, do we need reminding of the details of the life. It's rather like what Anthony Burgess attempted with Shakespeare in *Nothing Like the Sun*; comparison confirms the model as beyond compare.

Somehow, however, *The Mutual Friend* manages to gain from and yield nothing to *Our Mutual Friend*. This has much to do with the narrative device. Dickens is a ghostly presence in the charity hospital, enduring in remembrance and "written" by Dolby and Moon. "Moon—or so they *think* he's named; they don't really care, since he's shiny brown and short and comes in a cloud of Asiatic smells,"

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provides Dolby with rotgut in exchange for English lessons, and turns out at the novel's close to be its narrator. There's a certain archness in these visions, and revisions, and whether it's Dickens or Dolby or Moon seems sometimes just a self-reflexive game. So we have Dolby speaking "In the narratives I have perpetrated, in the guises I have made." and, next page, "Bloody right, I say. Moon here. Dolby isn't writing now. I say *Moon is here*, one eyed nigger baby from her Majesty's bleeding last empire. Moon speaking, too right."

Yet the whole has resonance. Dickens as "A Man of Parts" has stamped himself indelibly on every page; those who witnessed him cannot forget or exorcise the ghost. Therefore they spell him, in several styles. And the pastiche accumulates, at last, into something reverential: almost as if the unsayable name has been said, the voice from the whirlwind transcribed. Such referents are intentional; the book is about one writer's God. In the beginning was Dickens's word, but Moon's last words have to do with revision. "One wants something, after all, with a happy bloody ending to it. I will make changes."

Eliot, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," speaks of the way the present artist must engage the past. There's a vibrant rearranging—a kind of nexus established between those masterpieces that inform our culture, and our culture's need to continue. Such dialectic when successful has a double power: we lose sight neither of our origins nor the notion that art is original. *The Mutual Friend* seems to me to demonstrate this doubling conjunction—Busch has profited from Dickens, and the reader profits equally.

If an artist's reach is circular, as suggested above, then as his reach and grasp extend we come to be included. The concentric circles that surround this novel are large indeed—implicating by extension the very root of tale-telling: a twice-told story become familiar, subject to interpretation, and all the more welcome for that. *The Mutual Friend* is first-rate.

Nicholas Delbanco

Nicholas Delbanco teaches literature at Bennington College. His most recent novel is *Possession* (Morrow).

Injury Time
by Beryl Bainbridge

(George Braziller; $7.95)

Macbeth's was perhaps the most memorable, but from the time of Hrothgar's, which lasted several nights, to the time of Gatsby's, which went on till dawn, the disastrous dinner party has been as much a cliché of dramatic and narrative literature as it is an unfortunate fact of social life. I suppose the fictional violation of our most amiable ritual serves to emphasize the horrors of less amiable impulses, as the son is served up in a ragout, the warming-cover lifted to reveal the severed head or the pet budgerigar.

More frequently still, disaster at the table is merely funny, a forceful image of our ineptness as social beings. Could situation comedy survive without the scene in which the heroine sets the tomato aspic on fire while forgetting to light the burner under the pot roast? We know, before it appears, the destination of the banana cream pie. Nor are we surprised, in Beryl Bainbridge's *Injury Time*, to find the chops overdone and the dessert, inside a plastic bag, fallen behind the fridge. She has chosen a time-honored vehicle for her comedy.

But she has also chosen a dessert which is not a pie; it is, instead, foil wrapped, raisin stuffed apples, as yet unbaked, one of which becomes, in due course, a missile for her protagonist's frustration. *He* wanted pie. And the image of him heaving an apple across the room like a grenade is one of many examples of the book's fascinating marriage of the two traditions of dining disaster: the Gothic tradition of violence invading an intimate ceremony of comfort and friendship, and the comic tradition of the bumbling hostess and the guests who are not what they pretend to be.

The hostess in this case is Binny, a divorcée on the threshold of menopause, who has persuaded her married lover, Edward, that it is time for him to invite some "close friend" to dinner. Agreeing in principle, but far too conventional to risk even distant friends, Edward asks a business acquaintance whose wife he has never met. Edward, who is a tax accountant, is dismayed by the dishevelment in which Binny lives, her casual housekeeping, her tremulous upbringing of three adolescents, her middle-aged skin, but he tends to pretend that his disapproval is really being felt by someone else. Obsessively looking back at recurrent memories of prep-school disappointments, he looks forward obsessively to getting home punctually to his wife. And the invited couple, the Simpsons, are also busy mulling over their separate failures of love and sex and money, the business and boredom which make up their matrimonial void.

The scene is familiar enough; halfway between Wycherley and "I Love Lucy." But it is played on a stage set for a larger, darker drama, with a backdrop of Northwest London in decay, and, beyond that, rumors of a world disrupted by violence. Television brings the themes and temper of the times into Binny's living room. "Between placing the kettle on the gas and water coming to the boil, whole cities disintegrated, populations burned. A thousand deaths, real and fictional, had been enacted before her eyes." Binny is poorer than Edward and less educated, and her resentment of his exploitation of her, sexual and social, echoes a resentment common to our day. Her drunken friend, Alma, perpetually amorous and frequently beaten by her husband, pops in and out of the proceedings like Banquo's ghost, in search of solace and vacuum cleaners. At six-thirty every evening, a Greek neighbor ululates for the passing of whatever it is that is passing, and, incidentally, evokes the loss of tragedy as Sophocles knew it. And a black evangelist comes by to urge Binny to follow the Lord. She says she's too busy, and, incidentally, evokes the loss of faith as the Prophets knew it.

All day, as she prepares her middle-class, three-course dinner, for which neither her talents nor her world are suited, violence and anarchy hover in the corner of Binny's perception. They are implicit in the eggshells strewn over the hedge, and the neighbors fornicating behind the dustbins; they are explicit in a robbery which goes on quietly as Binny draws money from the bank. Finally they burst full upon her, in the shape of the four desperadoes who, the bank job accomplished, have failed to meet at the

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appointed rendezvous, and now find themselves regrouping in Binny's kitchen. They arrive, needless to say, already pursued by the police, in the middle of her dinner party, and immediately seize the four diners as hostages.

In their roles of criminals, they are having difficulties of their own which pretty much parallel the difficulties their hostages have playing good citizens. Binny, drawing on literary and cinematic precedents, assumes they are escaped convicts, but their leader, Ginger, tells her he's never been in jail. He wishes he had; his brother was in jail and learned several languages as well as all there is to know about Mahler and Stravinsky. It is apparently as hard for the thieves to behave with appropriate criminality as it is for their victims to adhere to the spirit of the laws of England. Scornful of Binny's housecleaning, the robbers are outspoken about their judgments, of which there are rather many. But when they leave, they forget their loot, and have to be reminded of it by Alma.

Younger than their hostages, the criminals play their game by slightly different rules. Ginger, who is shocked by Edward's connubial hypocrisy, takes sex, like cash, the most direct way, without any unnecessary intervention of work, emotion or pleasure. He is the emanation not only of London's decay, but, in spirit, the child of the middle-aged people gathered at Binny's table, the inevitable man of the future. Above all, he is the "wayward young man in westerns and gangster movies and war films," the message of television made flesh.

For clearly the world of Binny and her guests is past, and the game with these desperadoes, the footloose, feckless present, already lost. Still, they try to play on. But what is the game, and what are the rules? Binny compares their lives to a football match, already decided, in which the players, "Short of breath and flecked with mud, trembling in every limb," wait for the final whistle. The rules of marriage, affairs, raising children, keeping house, seem not to have worked. Edward, trained by a life of cricket and tax evasion, plays better than the others, and at one point organizes a ping-pong match at the lighted window of Binny's bedroom, to convince the police watching outside, that inside all is well.

But inside all is not well. There is, to begin with, no ping-pong ball. The match is mere illusion, its purpose so obscure as to escape all sense. The characters, desperate for a *modus vivendi*, or a *modus ludendi*, tend to put their trust upon delusions and on what they think other people think of them. Television is believable, but Binny finds reality quite unconvincing. And all of them have forgotten entirely what they really feel, or if, indeed, they ever really felt it.

Still, they are good sports, and improvise on their illusions as best they can. Mrs. Simpson, in a passion of maternal solicitude, catches a falling baby, only to find it is a doll. Complying all too gracefully with Ginger's insistence on sex, Binny wonders if this can be rape, and worries that her feet smell. While both Edward and Mr. Simpson make a life for themselves juggling exemptions and property values, and seem to engage in love affairs as much to keep themselves busy telling lies as for any other reason. Once ensconced with the kidnapper-thieves, all the hostages feel there must be some correct posture to take under the circumstances. But they never finally decide between fraternization, defiance, and passive endurance, and the book's most amiable moment comes when invaders and invaded forget their differences in hunger, and sit down together to a supper of bread and cheese.

For it becomes obvious that there is no game. There are no rules. And there is, in their lives as on the ping-pong table, no ball to play with. The only reality, after all, is the final whistle which blows in the novel's last sentence.

The book ends without resolution, mid-violence, so to speak. It opens with a joke without a punch line, which, still without a punch line, is repeated later. Beryl Bainbridge, a witty and spartan stylist, who deserves a great deal better of her publisher than the cartoon dust jacket and shocking pink cover that grace the book, has written a very funny, very complex dialogue between life and art; or, more exactly, between life and bad art, bad jokes, the reproduction of the Last Supper on the wall, the repetition of last generation's gangster movies on the tube. "'I keep thinking I'm watching television,'" says Binny. "'There doesn't seem to be much difference.'"

Bainbridge explores what difference there is. The setting, the characters, the situation, like the disastrous meal itself, are almost trite; almost the stuff from which serials are made. She mocks at the same time our lives' drab imitation of fiction, and our fictions' bright imitation of life. Though her impact is that of satire, and though her joke is really very good, her method has the purity of certain photographs, where a closeness of focus, a magnification of detail, turns organic confusion and the ugliness of the familiar into geometry. When the laughter is over, what remains is almost an abstraction, a rather novel view over a well-known landscape. The scale and clarity of its perspective are astonishing.

Edith Milton

Edith Milton is a novelist and short story writer.

Fragments d'un discours amoureux by Roland Barthes

(Éditions du Seuil; $13.50)

This, Barthes's latest, is, by my count, his fifteenth book. Together with the previous two, *The Pleasure of the Text* and *Roland Barthes* (which we already have in English), it may appear to mark a shift of orientation.

From the start of his writing career Barthes has been a critic of bourgeois myths and first among them that of the autonomous ego. The notion of *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) and the consequently enthusiastic support for the early Robbe-Grillet (*e.g.* "An Objective Literature") involved language which would ultimately obliterate subjectivity, not just that of an individual self, but any accepted way of relating to experience in general. The science of literature he advocated during most of the '60s was to be structural: it sought its object in an underlying system or code, and not in any of the individual utterances generated by it. The "literary work of art" was a tissue of mythical notions to be systematically undone. In any event it could no longer be con-

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sidered the product of an autonomous subject. The necessary sacrifice of the "author" was announced in *Critique et vérité* (1966) and performed in "La mort de l'auteur" (1968). Likewise, the "work of art," historically and ideologically circumscribed by the bourgeois era, had to give way to the open-endedness of the "text" (*e.g.* "De l'oeuvre au texte," 1971).

Roland Barthes by David Schorr

I have deliberately marshalled here those attitudes of Barthes which tend to the suppression of subjectivity. But pleasure, self and love are just the sort of things which seem to require reference to *some* subject in order to be grasped at all. A reader who has allowed himself to be molded by Barthes's earlier writings has the full right to demand an explanation: do these new themes sound a retreat from the critical positions of 20 years? If the psychological person has been, or is to be, abolished, just *who* might the experiencer of the text's pleasure, the narrator of R.B.'s life, and, now, the doting lover, *be*?

Many things are wrong with the form of these questions, and one of them is the verb "to be" (this review still has a classical narrative structure). The materialist theory of the subject promulgated by Barthes seeks to divest it of any claim to Being. Several strategies are outlined, and the one recommended most is to "generalize" (which, we are told, does not mean "collectivize") the subject—an expression I've always had difficulty with. But, appropriately enough, a quotation is there to help: "we have no right to ask *who* it is who interprets. It is interpretation itself, a form of the will to power which exists (not as 'being' but as process, a becoming) as 'passion' (Nietzsche)." From the ontological subject—the thinker or perceiver who is—it becomes a grammatical one, a speaker or writer who desires.

The following paragraph, in Barthes's "own" prose, prepares to reap the benefit of this act of liberation: "Then perhaps the subject returns, not as illusion, but as *fiction*. A certain pleasure is derived from imagining oneself as *individual*, of inventing a final, rarest fiction: the fictive identity." This is no doubt the program of the next book, a monograph on Roland Barthes in the series on great writers ("écrivains de toujours") published by "Seuil," where, however, at one point, "an American (or positivist, or disputatious: I cannot disentangle) student identifies, as if it were self-evident, *subjectivity* and *narcissism*: no doubt he thinks that subjectivity consists in talking about oneself, and in speaking well of oneself. This is because he is a victim of the old couple, the old paradigm: *subjectivity/objectivity*. Yet today the subject apprehends himself *elsewhere*, and "subjectivity" can return at another place on the spiral: deconstructed, taken apart, without anchorage: why should I not speak of 'myself' since this 'my' is no longer 'the self'?"

In taking the young man to task, the narrator of this fragment displays an old-fashioned, self-assertive, magisterial stance, of a type which other fragments condemn as being imaginary. The subject of *Roland Barthes* alternates among the pronouns "I" and "he" and the initials "R.B." There are also photographs, of the author (?), introduced as "the author's treat to

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himself for finishing his book." But, we are told, "I have kept only the images which enthrall me, *without my knowing why*." As long as it remains unconscious, the imaginary stance is all right—it marks the limits of the ego. The fragmentation of the text is the formal correlative of the inconsistencies and discrepancies among different stages and levels of consciousness fictionalized in it. The effect aimed at is neither a life-story nor a stream-of-consciousness but a flux-of-discourse. To ensure the "generalization" of the subject no semblance of development or duration is to be allowed to emerge from the flux. The order of the fragments is determined by the most arbitrary and conventional principle: the alphabet.

This practice is common to all three books, with some variation (Barthes is not a pedant) marking their continuity with each other and their difference from the semiotic works of the '60s, where numerical division into sections and paragraphs represented theoretical articulation. The most complex layout is displayed by *Fragments*. The book is made of 80 "figures" (both rhetorical tropes and theatrical poses, *e.g.*, Adorable, Askesis, Waiting, Heart, Écorché, To Write, Gradiva, Jealousy, Speechlessness, Scene, Alone, Suicide, Truth). Each figure has a title which is not necessarily identical with it (like "'This can't go on'" for unbearable or "Why?" for Why). Then comes the "argument" of the figure which may specify the use of a word ("Body. Any thought, any excitement, any interest stirred up in the loving subject by the beloved body"), or describe a station of the lover's progress ("Gossip. Injury experienced by the loving subject upon realizing that the beloved is involved in a 'gossip,' and hearing him spoken of in common manner"), or argue a point ("Obscene. Discredited by modern opinion, the sentimentality of love must be assumed by the loving subject as an outrageous transgression which leaves him alone and exposed; by an overturning of values, it is this sentimentality which today is the obscene in love"). The body of the text comes in numbered paragraphs (from 2 for Wake to 10 for I-Love-You). These are pleasantly miscellaneous: meditations, aphorisms, arguments, anecdotes. They range in topic and frame of reference from the personal to the political through literature, criticism, psychoanalysis, mysticism, opera, grammar. The whole is replete with quotation, paraphrase and commentary, with special prominence given to *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (also Freud, Plato, Proust, Bataille, friends identified by initials). As in Renaissance books, the printer left a margin wide enough on the left for the source to be identified opposite the borrowing; we are treated to a fuller reference, and occasionally a whole quote, at the bottom of the page. After the title-page and before the alphabetized figures start, there are prefatory texts in several types, providing statements of purpose and instructions for use, ending with: "It is then a lover who speaks saying:"—what follows is a discourse in love, not a person, reminding me of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.

The impetus for it springs from a paradoxical situation. The taboos and *idées reçues* against which Barthes and others have militated over the years have been so soundly defeated, in certain circles, as to be replaced by a new "permissive" conformity. "Anybody would understand that X . . . might have 'tremendous problems' with his sexuality; but no one will be interested in those which Y . . . may have with his sentimentality." The transgressive logic of his whole career impels Barthes to transgress this normalized transgression. So, with this book, structuralism may be said to regress from the bedroom. The result is a polyphonic discourse. In the foolish, infatuated, perverse adult-baby there survive the ironic, intelligent, oedipal demystifier and the indulgent mother of both who seems to be constantly muttering under her breath: "Yes, my boy, I know he's difficult, but I love him, and look how bright he is!" The subject spoken by these voices may be a Narcissus, but not a triumphant one. Seeing the truth (of demystification) and following the error (of sentimentality), he adopts the ingrate, possibly tragic role of the Fool. This is akin to the situation at the end of some great novels: the hero recognizes his limits as an empirical subject, and recognizes the futility of such recognition, the futility of all desire. Here, there is no middle to be found: only non-theoretical, non-narrative, non-mimetic simulation. Nevertheless, it makes pleasurable reading, at least for the most part.

Moshe Ron

Moshe Ron is a Lecturer at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. A US edition of *Fragments*, entitled *A Lover's Discourse*, will be published in August by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Correspondence, *from page 7*

Era (Viking, 1970), with many recommended policies for both domestic and foreign affairs, such as "participatory pluralism," "rational humanism," and a "Community of the Developed Nations."

The concept of a transition to a technetronic society—a society shaped by the impact of technology and electronics—is quite parallel to Rostow's exuberant evolutionary stage theory resulting in our "era of high mass consumption." Both images of the future were completely oblivious to any possibility of severe environmental degradation or resource scarcity. Prescience, obviously, is not a sought-after quality in our presidential advisers.

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Diarist Abroad

Fried Snowballs

The Paris *haute couturier* Jean-Louis Scherrer who, as they say, "dresses" Mme. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing ("our most faithful customer") gets an increasing number of his customers from the Third World. And why not? These folks also are part of the ruling political class. Scherrer's latest client is Mme. Félix Houphouet-Boigny, wife of the president of the Ivory Coast. She laid out about $40,000 a few weeks back for some of Scherrer's 1978 designer specials. Among America's first ladies, only Jacqueline Kennedy was a clothes horse on this scale. The great radical French agronomist René Dumont warned 20 years ago that, *"L'Afrique noire est mal partie."* (Black Africa is off to a bad start.) Dumont's message did not please progressive-minded people who were (and still are) unwilling to see the sham of third world pretensions, for which this trivial commerce is only additional evidence. The average citizen of Mme. Houphouet-Boigny's country, by the way, lives on about $500 a year.

My friend and *TNR* **contributor** Bernard-Henri Levy, whose *La barbarie à visage humain* is still making waves in Europe (and should do the same here next year when it is published in translation by Harper & Row) made some waves himself during a recent lecture tour in Mexico. I saw Levy on his return to Paris. His exquisitely sculpted face was marred by blisters and scars: the result of ammonia in hollowed-out oranges—along with rotten eggs, overripe tomatoes and plastic bags of shit—hurled at him by a mob of Mexican Communists, Trotskyites and hip Fidelistas. These usually quarrelsome elements were momentarily united by their common determination to silence Levy's indictment of the gulag societies of our time. Violence is not exactly a stranger to political culture in Mexico, where the gun long has been a routine instrument for adjudicating differences. But for 100 years, the insurgent left lived with the delusion that it had only to speak its visions to the masses in order to earn their loyalty. Today, no one can pretend any longer that the left in power, whatever its rhetoric, is anything but another system of coercion and brutality. The Fascist character of the Communist promise: this is Levy's message. It is also why Levy provokes the violence of his adversaries and why, despite the burns on his face and the pack's demands that he leave the amphitheatre, he was the very last to go.

If the labor movement is getting a bad name around the world, the American mineworkers should not get the blame. The justice of their cause is as great as the deprivations and risks they suffer. In Britain, on the other hand, some blame belongs to a network of trade unions that keeps newspapers and magazines hostage to a most short-sighted and reactionary Luddism. The *Times Literary Supplement*, for example, has been eager to replace its arcane and confusing weekly index on the back page with a clear table of contents on page two. This change, say the chapels, as the union locals are called there, is an innovation for which the *TLS* will have to pay a surcharge every week and forever. The ransom demanded for this trivial change happens to be more than the paper's margin of profit. If those of you who get *TLS* have been wondering what those chunks of white space distributed around the paper are, be assured that censorship has not suddenly been imposed in England. It's just that the unions have taken to harassing *TLS* for demands they could not possibly win in a reasonable negotiation. These unrequested design innovations are part of the campaign. The National Union of Journalists also has embarked on a campaign that would force every freelance and independent writer to join a nationwide editorial closed shop (see "Hard Pressed" by Nora Beloff, *TNR* Sep. 3). "I have signed on with the NUJ" an authentically radical English friend told me, "for the very reason I despise them. But either way, they may in the end shut me up. Which shows how the main threat to freedom is the aspiration for security."

Socialism may be experiencing something of a revival in Europe, but Marxist scholarship there is at the end of the line. To be sure, in England there are still two or three major historians writing in the idiom, and perhaps the same number in France. Otherwise, Marxism is the oligopolistic preserve of the Communist party hacks. The interests of the great schools of social thought now go way beyond the dynamics of social classes and productive forces. This result can be explained partially by the fact that Marxist generalization has entered into the mainstream along with the psychoanalytic illumination, cyclical recurrences and progressivist certainties, bureaucratic imperatives and ideological rationalizations—the new ecumenism of Clio. This ecumenism, having swallowed up the generalities, rejects Marxist specifics and prophecies as hokum. They've mostly turned out wrong, of course. But the surprise is that in America, where there has been very little of an explicitly socialist revival, some of the most interesting and original historical work is being done by people who call themselves Marxists, mostly younger scholars trained in the austere and rigorous canons of their distinctively anti-Marxist elders. A new quarterly, *Marxist Perspectives*, has attracted the formidable talents of Eugene Genovese, John Womack, Frederick Jameson, Christopher Lasch, Alan Trachtenberg, Elizabeth Fox, Martin Bernal, Ronald Radosh and Norman Birnbaum. It is available at $15 per year; address, 420 West End Ave., New York 10024. It marks the liberation of Marxist scholarship in this country from a handful of American party hacks, special pleaders and apologists. And, in some formal way, it also marks the end of American Marxism's exile from the republic of learning.

The Arabs are big right now in London. So wherever the rich purchase clothes, silver, art, real estate, furniture and junk, shop windows welcome their patronage with signs announcing, "Arabic spoken here." But in the window of one "bespoke" tailor off Saville Row (we call them custom tailors) there is a sign saying "Yiddish geredt" (Yiddish spoken). It is a miracle and a metaphor.

The French electorate has just plain busted the hearts of all those journalists and intellectuals so eager to prove that a phenomenon they called Eurocommunism would turn out to be benign. Of course, with the squalid parliamentary compromise in Italy, Eurocommunism will still be the spoken dream of many who would not for a moment contemplate putting themselves under its rule. In western Europe, while social democracy still breathes—and in some countries it breathes lustily—the only intrinsic and ultimate function of the Communist parties, their only genuine option, is to be ruthlessly extreme, on the Soviet model. The truth is that it has become their desire. This is why Laszek Kolakowski, the exiled Polish philosopher, says: "Euro-communism is as possible as fried snowballs."

M. P.

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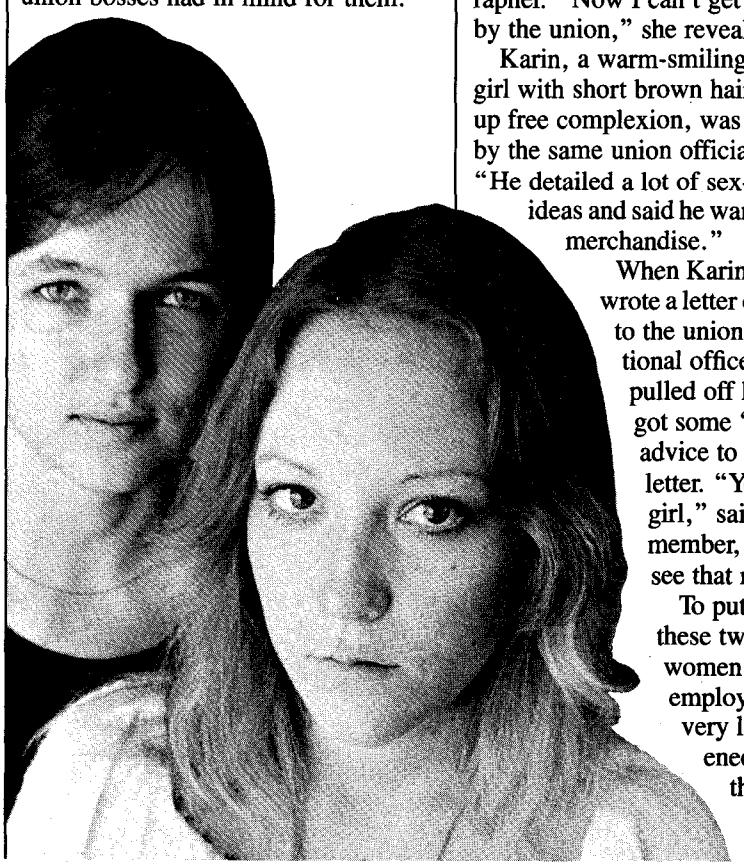
They Wanted A Job But Not At That Price.

Teri DeLoache, 19, and Karin Seritis, 20, are two bright attractive college girls in Oakland, Calif., who wanted to work as waitresses to help pay their way through school.

They were willing to join a union to get their jobs—but they didn't bargain for the "after hours assignments" their union bosses had in mind for them.



Brown-eyed, blonde-haired Teri was interviewed by the secretary of the union. He came right to the point: "You have a great body. You could make a lot of money."

Teri turned down his offer to "work" conventions, keep an apartment for male visitors, take trips with businessmen and pose for a photographer. "Now I can't get a job referral by the union," she reveals.

Karin, a warm-smiling outgoing girl with short brown hair and a make-up free complexion, was approached by the same union official. "He detailed a lot of sex-for-money ideas and said he wanted to test the merchandise."

When Karin refused and wrote a letter of complaint to the union's international office, she was pulled off her job. She got some "friendly" advice to withdraw her letter. "You're a pretty girl," said a union member, "I'd hate to see that ruined."

To put it bluntly, these two young women were denied employment and their very lives threatened because they refused to submit to prostitution.

They courageously decided to fight back, retaining a lawyer in November 1976, who filed a complaint charging mental duress and harassment. Incredibly, the lawyer's mother was savagely beaten by an attacker who warned, "You tell your son to drop this case."

He won't, thanks to the National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation, which entered the case in March 1977.

An amended complaint has been filed, charging unfair representation, sex discrimination, illegal use of the union hiring hall and asking $1 million in punitive damages.

Teri and Karin were fortunate. They found help. But how many other Teris and Karins haven't?

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation is helping everyone it can. It is currently assisting individual workers in more than 75 cases involving academic and political freedom, freedom from union violence, and the right to work for government without paying a private organization for that privilege.

If you'd like information on how you can help workers like Teri DeLoache and Karin Seritis, write:

The National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation
Suite 600
8316 Arlington Boulevard
Fairfax, Virginia 22038

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